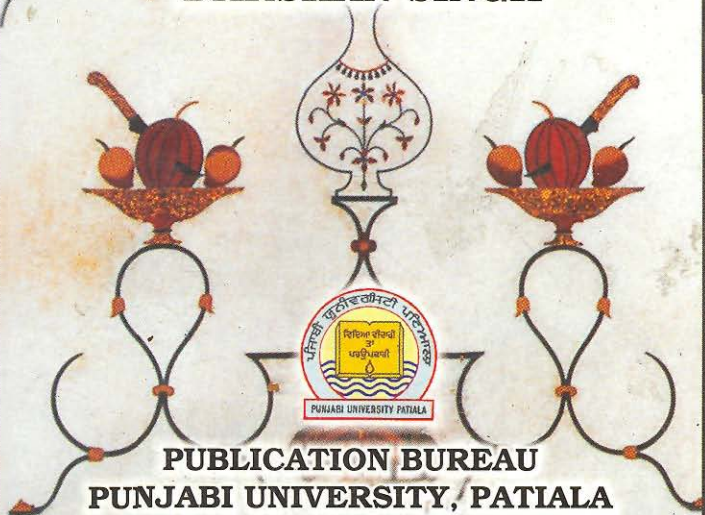


# GURU GRANTH SAHIB AMONG THE SCRIPTURES OF THE WORLD

*Edited by*  
**DARSHAN SINGH**



**PUBLICATION BUREAU  
PUNJABI UNIVERSITY, PATIALA**

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Darshan Singh



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Guru Gobind Singh Department of Religious Studies,  
Punjabi University, Patiala

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## FOREWORD

Four Hundredth Prakash Divas of Adi Granth falls in September 2004. One year ahead of this historic and solemn occasion in the social and cultural life of Punjab, the Punjabi University, Patiala drew up plans to dedicate the whole academic year to this grand event. Under its Four Hundredth Prakash Celebration Series, its faculties of Social Sciences, Languages, Arts and Culture, etc. chalked out their own programmes in the form of seminars, conferences, special lectures, etc. and to bring out commemorative volumes of the academic journals. Regular annual academic events such as Punjab History Conference, Punjabi Development Conference and commemorative lecture series were devoted to the Parkash Utsav Celebrations.

On this occasion Guru Gobind Singh Department of Religious Studies organized an International Seminar on the theme, Guru Granth Sahib : Formation, Unique Status and Place Among Scriptures, involving scholars of international repute from U.S.A., Canada, U.K. and reputed universities of India. Another unique feature of the seminar was that scholars who participated in the deliberations of the seminar from February 18-20, 2004 were representatives of diverse fields of study and different religious traditions. Selected papers presented in the seminar are being issued in book form for the benefit of coming generations of scholars to take the academic work forward.

I would like to congratulate the Department of Religious Studies—its faculty members, staff and students—for conducting a successful seminar on such an important theme. I also want to appreciate the untiring efforts and dedication of the Seminar Director and Editor of this volume for bringing the academic plan to its logical fruition.

Punjabi University,  
Patiala.

**Swarn Singh Boparai**

Kirti Chakra, Padma Shri

*Vice-Chancellor*



## INTRODUCTION

Guru Granth Sahib is the sacred book of the Sikhs. The word *Granth* comes from Sanskrit and it means a book as the Bible or the Qurān. It is variously called Adi Granth (primal scripture), Granth Sahib (the holy Granth), or Guru Granth Sahib. Compared to the earlier great scriptures of the world it is relatively of recent origins. Guru Nanak the founder of the faith was born a little over five hundred years ago. He composed his sacred poetry in the prevalent Punjabi poetic forms under the divine inspiration as corroborated by the Bani itself and set them to classical Indian musical modes (Ragas) for the purpose of devotional singing. These sacred compositions forms the nucleus of the future Sikh scripture.

Guru Nanak himself committed his holy verses to writing in the *pothis* (breviaries) which he carried on his person (as evidenced by Bhai Gurdas, the great Sikh savant in his first Var) during his long itineraries to different religious centres in India and neighbouring countries including Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, Afganistan, Sri Lanka, etc. We have the evidence of the *Puratan Janam Sakhi* edited by Bhai Vir Singh, (New Delhi : Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan, 1989, p. 207) that at the time of the appointment of successor to his divine mission Guru Nanak bestowed this Pothi also upon Guru Angad Dev. In fact the work of the compilation of Guru Granth Sahib began with Guru Nanak himself. Guru Angad employed reformed prevalent script called Gurmukhi to it, to carry the work forward. Guru Amar Das got the *pothis* of Bani compiled under his direct supervision, incorporating his own holy compositions to it. It was Guru Arjan Dev the fifth Sikh Guru who finally compiled the Adi Granth, having Bhai Gurdas, the most revered Sikh as amanuensis. The stupendous task of compilation took years of sustained devotional work involving a number of individual Sikhs and the Sangats spread over different centres of the Sikh religion. The holy enterprise of sifting, editing and compilation of hymns was accomplished under the discerning

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eye of Guru Arjan Dev, whose own compositions consists of the largest contribution to the sacred Granth. Along with the compositions of the first five Sikh Gurus a large number of hymns of the medieval Bhagats, Sants, Sufis, and some of the devoted followers associated with the Gurus were also incorporated in the Granth Sahib. On the methodological presentation of the hymns in the Adi Granth, Frederic Pincott, a learned British scholar of nineteenth century, who had already published his paper tracing the system on which the hymns of Rg-Veda were arranged, comments, that the book is arranged on a clearly traceable system, depending, firstly, on the tunes to which the poems were sung; secondly, on the nature or metre of the poems themselves, thirdly; on their authorship; and fourthly, on the clef or key deemed appropriate to them. It follows, as a corollary, that the positions of hymns have no reference to their antiquity or dogmatic importance; and also, that the Adi Granth is a single systematic collection, into which the later additions (as those of Ninth and Tenth Gurus) were inserted in their appropriate places. (Darshan Singh ed., *Western Image of the Sikh Religion* (New Delhi : National Book Organization, 1999, p. 210).

The Granth Sahib thus prepared was installed at the place most suited to it i.e. Harimandar Sahib, the central Sikh shrine on *Bhadon vadi ekam* Bikrami Sammat 1661 (A.D. 1604). Bhai Buddha Ji, a most venerated primal figure of early Sikhism, was appointed as the first Granthi by Guru Arjan Dev. This solemn occasion is celebrated by the Sikhs as Parkash Divas year after year. After the installation of Granth Sahib, Guru Arjan Dev and successor Gurus always took a lower place to sit and to retire for night in its presence. Guru Gobind Singh while staying at Talwandi Sabo (Damadama Sahib) re-edited the Adi Granth, inserted four Sabads in the liturgical portion and also included the hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur at the appropriate place. Bhai Mani Singh a great exponent of the Sikh beliefs and most respected Sikh worked as amanuensis with Guru Gobind Singh. Baba Deep Singh another contemporary warrior Sikh saint prepared four copies of the re-edited sacred corpus to be installed at the sacred Takhts of the Khalsa Panth.

Guru Gobind Singh before his departure from the mortal world at Nanded Sahib in 1708 discontinued the practice of appointing personal

Guru and appointed Granth Sahib as the Guru eternal for all times to come. Henceforth, the Granth Sahib came to be designated as Guru Granth Sahib. In the entry in the *Bhatt Vahi Talaunda Parganah Jind* it is recorded :

Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Master, son of Guru Tegh Bahadur, grandson of Guru Hargobind, great-grandson of Guru Arjan, of the family of Ram Das Surajbansi Gosal clan, Sodhi Khatri, resident of Anandpur, parganah Kahlur now at Nanded on Godavari bank in Deccan, asked Bhai Daya Singh, on Wednesday, *shukla chauth* of the month of Kartik 1765 BK. (6 October 1708), to fetch the Sri Granth Sahib. The Guru placed before it five pice and a coconut and bowed his head before it. He said to the Sangat, "It is my commandment : Own Sri Granth ji in my place. He who so acknowledges it will obtain his reward. The Guru will rescue him. Know this as the truth." (Harbans Singh ed., *The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, Vol. 4, Patiala : Punjabi University, 1998, p. 243).

Sirdar Kapur Singh the most versatile genius of Sikhism of recent times have also corroborated the above occurrence of Sikh history stating that Guru Gobind Singh, terminated human succession to the office of the Guru and established instead the condominium of the Granth, the book, and the Panth, the order of the Khalsa, with the following declaration, which ever since, is recited at the conclusion of every congregational prayer, morning and evening, and on all occasions of public worship by the Sikhs :

The Order of the Khalsa was established as was the command of the God;

This is now the commandment for all the Sikhs :

Accept the Granth as Guru;

Know Guru Granth ji as the visible body of the Gurus.

He who hath properly trained mind, shall find confirmation thereof in the contents of the book itself.

(D.S. Sri Mukh Vak Patshahi 10, p. 248).

(Kapur Singh, *Pārāśarāpraśna* (Amritsar : Guru Nanak Dev University, 1989) p. 169).

Unlike the other earlier scriptures of the world, Guru Granth Sahib was compiled and edited by the Divine preceptor Guru Arjan Dev himself. Thus the Divine revelation for the world is preserved therein in its original form. Sri Sangam Jagjit Singh Library



primal purity. Highlighting this unique aspect of the Guru Granth Sahib regarding its authenticity a twentieth century western scholar of Sikhism Max A. Macauliffe wrote :

The Sikh religion differs, as regards the authenticity of its dogma, from most other great theological systems. Many of great teachers the world has known have not left a line of their own compositions and we only know what they taught through tradition or second hand information. If Pythagoras wrote any of his tenets, his writings have not descended to us. We know only the teaching of Socrates through the writings of Plato and Xenophon. Buddha has left no memorials of his teaching, and for it we are obliged to depend on the works largely tintured with romance : Kung fu-tze, known to Europeans as Confucius, left no documents in which he detailed the principles of his moral and social system. The Arabian Prophet did not himself reduced to writing the Chapters of his Quran. They were written or compiled by his adherents and followers. But the compositions of the Sikh Gurus are preserved and we know at firsthand what they taught.

(M.A. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. I, Intro. (New Delhi : S. Chand & Company, 1978) p. III).

The essence of Guru Granth Sahib consists in its being the vehicle of Divine revelation, a repository of spiritual wisdom suited to all times, climes and spaces. In the Sikh common parlance Guru Granth is regarded as Sabda-Avtara (Word incarnate). The Word as vehicle of Divine revelation has always been recognized as the spiritual guide. Guru Granth Sahib is Guru because its Divine knowledge leads to liberation if properly appropriated and interpreted in the individual and community life. Almost all the prominent Sikh interpreters have repeatedly emphasized this aspect of the Granth Sahib.

In the views of Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha, "it is a collection of the sacred utterances of the Sikh Gurus issuing forth from the deepest spiritual inspirations." (*Gurmat Martand*, Vol. I (Amritsar : Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, 1978), p. 411). "Unlike some other scriptures", says Prof. Talib, "it is neither history nor mythology, nor a collection of incantations. Its contents are spiritual poetry, the vision of the cosmic order and exhortation to higher life. In this respect it is a unique scripture among the source books of religion. It remains unique in Sanskrit, English and Urdu literature as a collection of God-inspired utterances by men who have attained the highest spiritual realization." (*Journal of Sikh Studies*, Vol. I, No. 1, 1974, p. 1).

communicated the Divine Word in a spirit of deep humility and compassion for mankind.” (Sri Guru Granth Sahib in English Translation, Vol. I, Introduction (Patiala : Punjabi University, 1984) p. XXI). Prof. Puran Singh expressing his helplessness to adequately express the meaning of Gurbani in any conceptual or systematic form, submits, “I know I am dealing with the untranslatable beauty of music of the soul, and yet I dare to put in prose the poetry which is understood only when it is sung, and that too, when sung by angels in the soul of man, when it is heard chanted by him who is lost in it.” (*Spirit of the Sikh*, Part II, Vol. I, (Patiala : Punjabi University, 1980,) p. 61). In the Sikh religious life Guru Granth Sahib occupies a far more central place than a mere scripture. To the Sikhs it is the living Guru. In the words of Prof. Talib it is, “the embodiment in visible form of the essence of the person of the Ten holy Gurus. Being the repository of the Divine Word (Shabad, Nam ) it is offered Worship not mere veneration.” (Sri Guru Granth Sahib in English Translation, Vol. I, Intro. p. XXI). Prof. Arnold Toynbee’s observation is not far from truth when he observes, “The Adi Granth is remarkable for several reasons. Of all known religious scriptures, the book is most highly venerated. It means more to the Sikhs than even the Quran means to Muslims, the Bible to the Christians, the Torah to the Jews. The Adi Granth is the Sikh’s perpetual guru (spiritual guide.) (Trilochan Singh et. al. (Trans.) *Selections from the Sacred Writings of the Sikhs*, London : George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1965), Foreword, p. 9).

Among all the great religions of the world Sikhism is comparatively of recent origins and historically close to our times. Being of recent origins its insights are far more significant and relevant to the crises and problems of our times. Sensing this closeness of the Sikh spirit to the modern times, Noble laureate Mrs. Pearl S. Buck exclaims, “There is something strangely modern about these scriptures (Guru Granth) and this puzzled me until I learned that they are in fact comparatively modern, compiled as late as the 16th century, when explorers were beginning to discover that the globe upon which we all live is a single entity divided only by arbitrary lines of our making” (Sri Guru Granth Sahib, English version, trans. By Gopal Singh, *Some Opinions*, p. XIV). Elaborating the theme of Sikhism’s proximity to the modern spirit, Pearl S. Buck in

her own creative way explains further, “One wonders what might have been produced if the ten founders of Sikh religion had been acquainted with the findings of modern science. Where would their quest for knowledge have led them had science been their means instead of religion? Perhaps in the same direction, for the most important revelation now being made by scientists is that their knowledge, as it opens one door after another to the many universes in eternal existence affirms the essential unity of sciences and religion. It is impressive and significant that in the study of these Sikh scriptures we see this affirmation through the approach of the brilliant minds and deep searching hearts of men who are part of India. Through them we see a beyond that belongs to all. The result is universal revelation” (Ibid., p. XIV)

World renowned historian Prof. Arnold Toynbee from his own historians’ approach sees another merit of the Sikh scripture from among all the scriptures of the world for our present troubled times. He pronounces, “Mankind’s religious future may be obscure, yet one thing can be foreseen : the living higher religions are going to influence each other more than ever before, in these days of increasing communication between all parts of the world and all branches of human race. In this coming religious debate, the Sikh Religion, and its scriptures, the Adi Granth, will have something of special value to say to the rest of the world. This religion is itself a monument of creative spiritual intercourse between two traditional religions whose relations have otherwise not been happy. This is a good augury” (*Selections from Sacred Writings of the Sikhs*, Foreword, pp. 10-11).

From the foregoing brief comments of the reputed scholars in different fields, two important broad dimensions of the Guru Granth Sahib may be easily discerned. On the one hand Guru Granth Sahib occupies central place in the Sikh way of life as the basic spiritual guide and as an object of worship being the repository of the Divine Word. On the other, Guru Granth Sahib addresses to the crucial problems of the modern world, having bearing on social harmony and co-existence. Its insights into the interfaith relations, unified vision of life, future of mankind, positive approach to the problem of diversity, human inequality are unparalleled among the great scriptures of the World.

International Seminar on the theme Guru Granth Sahib : Formation, Unique Status and Place Among Scriptures organized by Guru Gobind Singh Department of Religious Studies from February 18-20, 2004. The Seminar was organized as part of Punjabi University's Four Hundredth Prakash Utsav Celebrations to commemorate the completion of 400th year of the first compilation of Adi Granth/Granth Sahib in the year 1604 A.D. The theme of the seminar aimed at providing brief introduction to the history of the compilation of Guru Granth Sahib and bringing out the salient features of its editorial scheme. It further sought to elaborate the unique status of Guru Granth Sahib in the Sikh religious life along with exploration of literary, aesthetic, musical merits of its form and the significance of its universal spiritual vision free from sectarian, racial, gender biases. Finally the seminar endeavoured to elaborate the place of Guru Granth Sahib among the scriptures of the world by comparing its vision and insights with the great scriptures of the world. The overall goal of the organizers was that the theme would pave the way to academically explore Guru Granth Sahib in its depth and broadness in the comparative perspective with a view to prepare the ground for further cooperation and understanding among the religious communities of the ever shrinking world. The presentation of the papers in this volume follows almost the above goal and scheme to further inter-faith understanding and cooperation. If it happens, it would be a most appropriate homage to the vision of Guru Granth Sahib and its compilers.

—Editor



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## *Inaugural Address*

# THE THEORY OF THE NAME

*J. P. S. Uberoi*

It is a happy but heavy responsibility that you, Mr Vice-Chancellor, honoured guests and friends, have given me to perform. I have only to wish you all success during all your scholarly deliberations planned for these three days which the Punjabi University, Patiala, has decided to devote to mark the 400th anniversary of the great historic event at Amritsar, A.D. 1604, the completion of the Adi Granth.

If you ask me for a contribution to this scholarly effort, it will be only to remind you of the importance of the method(s) of approach, along with questions of evidence, texts and data, in determining the results of our discussions. The study of Punjabi entered the university only in 1928, when the Punjab University, Lahore, appointed Mohan Singh Diwana to the new post of lecturer in the Oriental College. Dr. Diwana explained his approach in his *Linguistics and Gurmat (Pākha vīgyan te Gurmat gyan)*, which followed thereafter. The general method of the study of meaning in discourse, a non-dualist or dialectical semiology, was developed here at Patiala by Harjeet Singh Gill, who contributed a structural study of Japuji in 1969. The theme to which I would invite your preliminary attention today is the theory of the name, if I may call it that, which is the philosophy of Sikhism.

In the Jewish tradition, where this question has been discussed, one would begin and end with a threefold distinction. There is first the *tetragrammaton*, the personal name (proper name) of God, YHWH, by which he is known and addressed, written but not spoken, because it works best in the silence and secrecy of time. Secondly, there are those few terms (generic names), e.g. the Creator, the Ruler and the Judge, titles which refer to his status and role, office and functions, which are not to be copied or usurped by man. Third is the large class of God's

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names, words describing his attributes and qualities, as against his essence and substance, which are precisely meant for emulation and for man (and woman) to bear living witness to.

The theory of the name of God had also played a central role in the earliest and non-canonical heterodox writings of Christianity, where the etymology of the name Jesus, for example, would be rendered, "He who is saves." In the thirteenth century, there were baptismal rites of Gnostic sects, corresponding to Indian non-dualism, where the neophyte "puts on" the mystical "name of Jesus" (Eleazar of Worms).

The name is a sign, symbol or symptom of the covenant between God, man and nature, or between the Creator, creature and creation (unity in plurality). In the Jewish tradition, a rite of initiation in the strictest sense is that simply concerned with the transmission of the name of God from master to pupil. For the Kabbalist Jew the great name of God in his creative unfolding is Adam; and the role of Adam Kadmon, primal man, corresponds to that of the perfect cosmic man, man as microcosm, whom Ibn Arabi later named *insan-i-kamil*. God who can be apprehended by man is thus himself the first man, *Purusha*.

In the Islamic tradition it was Ibn Arabi of Spain (1165-1240) who had influence in India, where his greatest exponent was Sheikh Aman of Panipat (d. 1551). I recommend to you for further consideration the suggestion of S.A.A. Rizvi, made in this very hall in 1969, on the occasion of Guru Nanak's birth quincentenary celebration, that the object of the *Janam-sakhis* is to try and present Guru Nanak as just such an *insan-i-kamil* in the precise Sufic sense of Ibn Arabi.

In this mystical view, prophets and saints and other spirituals are regarded as individuations or particular examples of the "perfect man," the microcosm, while the universal category or the species "perfect man" is the complete theophany, the macrocosm, the totality of the divine names and attributes through which the divine essence or the godhead reveals itself to itself, its virtualities in its actuality, manifested in multiple names and forms, vassals of love. "The end or goal of love is the unification (*ittihad*) which consists in the beloved's self becoming the lover's self and vice versa," It is a variety of non-dualism in the sense of unity in the duality, reciprocity and dialogue of the lord of the name (*rabb*) and the servant of the name (*‘abd*) : thus God through

man realizes his unity in plurality, and man through God reciprocally, because the plurality of creation, flowing forth from God as the world, returns to God as man.

In fact, the true agent of the religious act (*bhagat*), the subject of worship, is none other than God himself in one or the other of his aspects and names. The created universe is the theophany (*tajalli*) of his names and attributes, which would not exist if the creature, the subject, did not exist. The divine nature (*lahut*) and the created nature (*nasut*), the exoteric aspect (*zahir*) and the esoteric aspect (*batin*), find an exemplary conjunction in the Prophet's person, in which the name of God becomes visible, so to say. To know oneself is to know one's lord, because it is this lord who knows himself in you. The name of God is the form under which God reveals himself to himself in that particular man.

In her recent writing on the subject (2002), as yet unpublished, Anuradha Veeravalli of Delhi University, department of philosophy, has argued that to rightly know the universe of name and form is to know it in relation to the unity, which is to know it, not as an autonomous system of nature, but as a sign, symptom or symbol (*linga*) of the relation between unity and plurality, which is the real and the true covenant between God, man and nature, and possibly also between religion, politics and science.

According to the philosophically presupposed/posited relation (or the lack thereof) between the unity and the plurality, names may be of substance or of attribute or of relation. (1) Where plurality is seen as an emanation from the unity, names refer primarily to substance, and there can be no real separation of substance and attribute. Shankaracharya thus posits the essential nature of Brahman as one where no legitimate distinction can be made between substance and attribute, and the ultimate goal of liberation is defined as identification of the (individual) soul with Brahman.

(2) Where unity and duality are regarded as two separate realities, names and form may refer either to substance or to attributes of substance or to their relation. Thus Madhwacharya shows the possibility of their being three types of goals achieved according to the merit of one's actions—corresponding to gods, seers and humans, and therefore to the names of substance, relation and attribute.

(3) Where unity exists in the plurality, as say in Ramanuja, all names and forms refer to a relation of the two, which may be revealed by the dialectics of correlation, opposition, mediation or of contradiction, correspondence and complementarity. Through *Purusha* witnessing himself in the names and forms of *Prakriti*, “freedom is possible.” It is not yet clear to us whether the trinity of substance, attribute and relation can be further made to correspond to the distinction of sign, symptom and symbol in a semiological analysis.

Non-dualist mediation between Brahman and the universe, *Purusha* and *Prakriti*, is the true issue; and our revaluation of name and form as signs of this mediation forms the real basis of all three ways of knowledge (*jnana*), of vocation (*karma*) and of invocation (*bhakti*). It is no mere coincidence then, Dr. Anuradha Veeravalli concludes, that the exemplars of the modern *Bhakti* and Tantric traditions, the new religion of Sikhism, and earlier Lingayatism and later Mahatma Gandhi’s experiments with truth, all have this in common that they recognize, celebrate and eulogize the potency of the name. *Bhakti* does not have its bases only in spiritual experience or simple faith, therefore, but in the theoretical realization and revaluation of the theory of the name as the essence of the classical Indian tradition, and therefore of *Nam-marga* as the modern way of mediation of God, man and nature or in other words of religion, politics and science.

It is significant that the etymology of the term *bhakti* means “partaking,” referring to the creature’s share in God’s creation through labour in production and reproduction, and the name that designates the creature’s specific office then becomes his new name. The name in Sikhism, then, as with the Sufi or the Sant, is not meant merely, only or chiefly for reference or the designation of entities : it is a definition of the relation between the part and the whole, the subject and the object of worship, service and self sacrifice.

Thus lay Christian labour might be regarded as the worship of names and forms related to one’s calling; in fact, therefore, labour is simply the modern and vernacular name for (self)-sacrifice. Similarly, the etymology of *Sruti* refers to “that which is heard,” and it is taken as eternal, unchanging and impersonal. But, without denying this aspect, one may point out that what is implied is a “hearer” rather than a

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transcendent non-human speaker or author. Thus we infer an eternal and universal revelation that will be “heard” by one who has the capability to hear it or one who is chosen, the exemplar who hears *Sruti* and then utters it in and with his tongue (*bani*). “Thus *Sruti* and *vani* make a pair, the one ineffective without the other.”

From this point of view, I may add that between one-third and one-half of the Quran is about the names of God; and this method of approach to the discourse of the word and the world is the largest single topic in God’s revelation for the Muslim—as Guru Nanak and the Adi Granth knew him. It has been further suggested by an heterodox Muslim opinion (Qadiani, Ahmadi) that the Japuji, the chief composition of the first guru, is in some way his commentary on the Quran, but we have no independent confirmation thus far, and I cannot test this threshold but must leave that task to other more capable hands. Thank you, Godspeed and good luck!



*Key-Note Address*

## THE ADI GRANTH : AN APPRECIATION

*Harjeet Singh Gill*

In the beginning of my presentation a few preliminary remarks :  
the first remark refers to the divinity and sanctity of the divine word, the shabad, the Guru's utterance, the Gurubani :

ਜੈਸੀ ਮੈ ਆਵੈ ਖਸਮ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ  
ਤੈਸੜਾ ਕਰੀ ਗਿਆਨੁ ਵੇ ਲਾਲੇ ॥

.....

(ਤਿਲੰਗ, ਮ. ੧, ਪੰਨਾ 722)

ਹਉ ਢਾਢੀ ਵੇਕਾਰੁ ਕਾਰੈ ਲਾਇਆ ॥  
ਰਾਤਿ ਦਿਹੈ ਕੈ ਵਾਰੁ ਧੁਰਹੁ ਫੁਰਮਾਇਆ ॥  
ਢਾਢੀ ਸਚੈ ਮਹਲਿ ਖਸਮਿ ਬੁਲਾਇਆ ॥  
ਸਚੀ ਸਿਫਤਿ ਸਾਲਾਹ ਕਪੜਾ ਪਾਇਆ ॥  
ਸਚਾ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਨਾਮੁ ਭੋਜਨੁ ਆਇਆ ॥  
ਗੁਰਮਤੀ ਖਾਧਾ ਰਜਿ ਤਿਨਿ ਸੁਖੁ ਪਾਇਆ ॥  
ਢਾਢੀ ਕਰੇ ਪਸਾਉ ਸਬਦੁ ਵਜਾਇਆ ॥  
ਨਾਨਕ ਸਚੁ ਸਾਲਾਹਿ ਪੂਰਾ ਪਾਇਆ ॥

(ਮਾਝ ਵਾਰ ੧, ਪੰਨਾ 150)

as the Lord bids me  
so do I discourse, O dear Lalo

....

to proclaim His glory  
is my mission  
the Lord of the universe  
called me to His audience  
and bestowed on me  
the muse  
the ceremonial robe  
the sublime nectar  
the supreme bliss

to sing His praise  
in celestial rhythm  
in divine music  
in universal harmony

The second remark refers to the composition and the compilation of the Adi Granth. Guru Arjun Dev had a stupendous task before him. The sheer volume of the corpus, the texts of the Gurus, the verses of the bhaktas and the sufis that he had decided to include were varied and presented, at least at the manifest level, different discursive formations. They were duly re-organized, re-arranged, re-structured to follow a specific discourse whose distinctive features, whose basic thematic parameters were delineated in the opening composition, the Japuji of Guru Nanak Dev. Other than this highly complex and arduous task of editing a huge volume of the sacred texts, Guru Arjan also decided to give to the Adi Granth an unusual form, a unique form in the history of the architectonics of any text, sacred or secular, a formal and conceptual structure constituted following the rhythms of the classical music. This extremely rigorous exercise, this concentration on every detail, every contour of form and content, of rhyme and reason, of text and discourse would have been uphill task for any person, human or divine. That the Guru accomplished this unprecedented editing with fitness and excellence is manifest from the fact that such an enormous corpus of texts can be presented now as one, unique conceptual construct. The form and the content have been blended into perfect harmony with innumerable permutations and combinations through hundreds of its sacred pages. I am sure there are several scholars assembled here who are highly erudite in this field, and will, during the deliberations of this seminar, shed light on different aspects and techniques of this editing.

The third preliminary remark refers to the language of the Bani. The simple Punjabi that was used until then to articulate the routine affairs of a farmer, a trader, a householder was transformed into an idiom of highly charged metaphysical truths. There is a constant conceptual movement from metonymy to metaphor, from physics to metaphysic, from anthropology to cosmology. At times, it was simply a question of ethics, at others, the vision, the articulation of the discourse was extended<sup>1</sup>

to extremely complex cosmological interpolation :

ਮਨੁ ਹਾਲੀ ਕਿਰਸਾਣੀ ਕਰਣੀ  
ਸਰਮੁ ਪਾਣੀ ਤਨੁ ਖੇਤੁ ॥  
ਨਾਮੁ ਬੀਜੁ ਸੰਤੋਖੁ ਸੁਹਾਗਾ  
ਰਖੁ ਗਰੀਬੀ ਵੇਸੁ ॥

(ਸੋਰਠ ੧, ਪੰਨਾ 595)

ਸੇ ਗਿਰਹੀ ਜੇ ਨਿਗ੍ਰਹੁ ਕਰੈ ॥  
ਜਪੁ ਤਪੁ ਸੰਜਮੁ ਭੀਖਿਆ ਕਰੈ ॥  
ਪੁੰਨ ਦਾਨ ਕਾ ਕਰੇ ਸਰੀਰੁ ॥  
ਸੇ ਗਿਰਹੀ ਗੰਗਾ ਕਾ ਨੀਰੁ ॥

(ਰਾਮਕਲੀ, ਵਾਰ, ਮ. ੧, ਪੰਨਾ 952)

ਸੇ ਅਉਧੂਤੀ ਜੋ ਧੂਪੈ ਆਪੁ ॥  
ਭੀਖਿਆ ਭੋਜਨੁ ਕਰੈ ਸੰਤਾਪੁ ॥  
ਅਉਹਨ ਪਟਣ ਮਹਿ ਭੀਖਿਆ ਕਰੈ ॥  
ਸੇ ਅਉਧੂਤੀ ਸਿਵਪੁਰਿ ਚੜੈ ॥

(ਰਾਮਕਲੀ, ਵਾਰ, ਮ. ੧, ਪੰਨਾ 952)

ਸੇ ਉਦਾਸੀ ਜਿ ਪਾਲੇ ਉਦਾਸੁ ॥  
ਅਰਧ ਉਰਧ ਕਰੇ ਨਿਰੰਜਨ ਵਾਸੁ ॥  
ਚੰਦ ਸੂਰਜ ਕੀ ਪਾਏ ਗੰਢਿ ॥  
ਤਿਸੁ ਉਦਾਸੀ ਕਾ ਪੜੈ ਨ ਕੰਧੁ ॥

(ਰਾਮਕਲੀ, ਵਾਰ, ਮ. ੧, ਪੰਨਾ 952)

ਸੇ ਬੈਰਾਗੀ ਜਿ ਉਲਟੇ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ॥  
ਗਗਨ ਮੰਡਲ ਮਹਿ ਰੋਪੈ ਬੰਮੁ ॥  
ਅਹਿਨਿਸਿ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਰਹੈ ਧਿਆਨਿ ॥  
ਤੇ ਬੈਰਾਗੀ ਸਤ ਸਮਾਨਿ ॥

(ਰਾਮਕਲੀ, ਵਾਰ, ਮ. ੧, ਪੰਨਾ 953)

Plough your fields  
with pure thoughts  
and right deeds  
irrigate them  
with grace and sincerity  
sow the Name of the Lord  
and level the field  
with patience and poverty

...      ...      ...  
 The householder is he  
 who controls his passion  
 who leads the life of  
 discipline, temperance and devotion  
 who transforms his body  
 into a space of  
 charity and benevolence  
 his being becomes pure  
 like the water of Ganga  
 he lives in His will

...      ...      ...  
 The Avdhuti is he  
 who burns his self  
 who endures all hardship of life  
 who lives in love and grace

...      ...      ...  
 The Udasi is he  
 who is not caught  
 in the snares of Maya  
 who combines within himself  
 the heat of the sun  
 and the cold of the moon  
 who lives in truth and temperance

...      ...      ...  
 The Bairagi is he  
 whose mind and body are balanced  
 whose devotion is beyond all illusions  
 whose reflections are pure  
 whose thoughts are  
 in search of truth

The fourth remark refers to the ruthless critique of corruption, falsehood and deception that had become the hallmark of Indian social fabric :

ਕਲਿ ਕਾਤੀ ਰਾਜੇ ਕਾਸਾਈ  
 ਧਰਮੁ ਪੰਖ ਕਰਿ ਉਡਰਿਆ ॥

ਕੂੜੁ ਅਮਾਵਸ ਸਚੁ ਚੰਦ੍ਰਮਾ  
ਦੀਸੈ ਨਾਹੀ ਕਹ ਚੜਿਆ ॥

... ..

(ਵਾਰ ਮਾਝ ਕੀ, ਮ. ੧, ਪੰਨਾ 145)

ਕੂੜੁ ਰਾਜਾ ਕੂੜੁ ਪਰਜਾ  
ਕੂੜੁ ਸਭੁ ਸੀਸਾਰੁ ॥  
ਕੂੜੁ ਮੰਡਪ ਕੂੜੁ ਮਾੜੀ  
ਕੂੜੁ ਬੈਸਣਹਾਰੁ ॥  
ਕੂੜੁ ਸੁਇਨਾ ਕੂੜੁ ਰੁਪਾ  
ਕੂੜੁ ਪੈਨਣਹਾਰੁ ॥  
ਕੂੜੁ ਕਾਇਆ ਕੂੜੁ ਕਪੜੁ  
ਕੂੜੁ ਰੂਪੁ ਅਪਾਰੁ ॥  
ਕੂੜੁ ਮੀਆ ਕੂੜੁ ਬੀਬੀ  
ਖਪਿ ਹੋਏ ਖਾਰੁ ॥  
ਕੂੜਿ ਕੂੜੈ ਨੇਹੁ ਲਗਾ  
ਵਿਸਰਿਆ ਕਰਤਾਰੁ ॥  
ਕਿਸੁ ਨਾਲਿ ਕੀਚੈ ਦੋਸਤੀ  
ਸਭੁ ਜਗੁ ਚਲਣਹਾਰੁ ॥

(ਆਸਾ ਕੀ ਵਾਰ, ਮ. ੧, ਪੰਨਾ 468)

It is the age of the dagger of the butcher kings  
religion has vanished the dark night of falsehood  
is spread all over  
the moon of truth has disappeared

... ..

Falsity and deception  
are the order of the day  
the kings, the denizens  
the world at large  
are all stuck in the mire of deception  
the gold, the silver, the wealth  
are only illusions  
so are our bodies,  
our clothes, our forms  
men and women deceive each other  
love, faith and friendship  
are replaced by fraud and friction

The fifth and the final preliminary remark refers to the Guru's critique of all rites and rituals, customs and conventions which have reduced the principles and doctrines of the sacred and the spiritual to a ceremonial mockery :

ਦਇਆ ਕਪਾਹ ਸੰਤੋਖੁ ਸੂਤੁ  
ਜਤੁ ਗੰਢੀ ਸਤੁ ਵਟੁ ॥  
ਏਹੁ ਜਨੇਊ ਜੀਅ ਕਾ  
ਹਈ ਤ ਪਾਡੇ ਘਤੁ ॥  
ਨਾ ਏਹੁ ਤੁਟੈ ਨ ਮਲੁ ਲਗੈ  
ਨਾ ਏਹੁ ਜਲੈ ਨ ਜਾਇ ॥  
ਧੰਨੁ ਸੁ ਮਾਣਸ ਨਾਨਕਾ  
ਜੇ ਗਲਿ ਚਲੇ ਪਾਇ ॥

... ..

(ਅਸਾ ਕੀ ਵਾਰ, ਮ. ੧, ਪੰਨਾ 471)

ਜੋਗੁ ਨ ਖਿਥਾ ਜੋਗੁ ਨ ਡੰਡੈ  
ਜੋਗੁ ਨ ਭਸਮ ਚੜਾਈਐ ॥  
ਜੋਗੁ ਨ ਮੁੰਦੀ ਮੂੰਡਿ ਮੁਡਾਇਐ  
ਜੋਗੁ ਨ ਸਿੰਛੀ ਵਾਈਐ ॥  
ਅੰਜਨ ਮਾਹਿ ਨਿਰੰਜਨਿ ਰਹੀਐ  
ਜੋਗ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਇਵ ਪਾਈਐ ॥

... ..

(ਸੁਹੀ, ਮ. ੧, ਪੰਨਾ 730)

ਪੰਜਿ ਨਿਵਾਜਾ ਵਖਤ ਪੰਜਿ  
ਪੰਜਾ ਪੰਜੇ ਨਾਉ ॥  
ਪਹਿਲਾ ਸਚੁ ਹਲਾਲ ਦੁਇ  
ਤੀਜਾ ਬੈਰ ਖੁਦਾਇ ॥  
ਚਉਥੀ ਨੀਅਤਿ ਰਾਸਿ ਮਨੁ  
ਪੰਜਵੀ ਸਿਫਤਿ ਸਨਾਇ ॥

(ਵਾਰ ਮਾਝ ਕੀ, ਮ. ੧, ਪੰਨਾ 141)

The rituals and ceremonies of the sacred thread, jneu, of the Brahman, the austerities and the customs of the jogis, the five prayers of the Muslims are condemned in no uncertain terms. Guru Nanak invites the Brahman to bring a jneu of devotion, compassion and truth. He counsels the yogi to abandon his ceremonial staff and ashes, his austere physical exercises. He advises the Muslims to substitute their five ritual prayers with truth, temperance, devotion, faith and



fortitude. He reminds them all of the universal sovereign, His will and truth :

ਨਾ ਸਤਿ ਦੁਖੀਆ ਨਾ ਸਤਿ ਸੁਖੀਆ  
 ਨਾ ਸਤਿ ਪਾਣੀ ਜੰਤ ਫਿਰਹਿ ॥  
 ਨਾ ਸਤਿ ਮੂੰਡ ਮੁਡਾਈ ਕੇਸੀ  
 ਨਾ ਸਤਿ ਪੜਿਆ ਦੇਸ ਫਿਰਹਿ ॥  
 ਨਾ ਸਤਿ ਰੁਖੀ ਬਿਰਖੀ ਪਥਰ  
 ਆਪੁ ਤਛਾਵਹਿ ਦੁਖ ਸਹਹਿ ॥  
 ਨਾ ਸਤਿ ਹਸਤੀ ਬਧੇ ਸੰਗਲ  
 ਨਾ ਸਤਿ ਗਾਈ ਘਾਹੁ ਚਰਹਿ ॥  
 ਜਿਸੁ ਹਥਿ ਸਿਧਿ ਦੇਵੈ ਜੇ ਸੋਈ  
 ਜਿਸ ਨੋ ਦੇਇ ਤਿਸੁ ਆਇ ਮਿਲੈ ॥

(ਰਾਮਕਲੀ, ਵਾਰ, ਮ. ੧, ਪੰਨਾ 952)

truth lies not in austerities  
 nor does it belong to  
 those who stay put in water  
 truth lies not in shaven heads,  
 nor does it belong to  
 those who stay silent like the stones and the trees  
 truth lies not in chamois and bonds  
 nor does it belong to  
 those who eat grass like cow  
 truth lies with the absolute truth  
 of the true Lord  
 truth lies in His grace  
 His love, His devotion

These preliminary five remarks are based on my reading of Guru Nanak Bani that forms a substantial part of the Adi Granth. I have no doubt that other, different perceptions are possible. That would only show the extreme richness and complexity of the discourse of the Adi Granth.

Finally, I come to the core of my presentation with two compositions of Guru Nanak : ਅਰਬਦ ਨਰਬਦ ਧੰਧੁਕਾਰਾ and ਗਗਨ ਮੈ ਥਾਲੁ ਰਵਿ ਚੰਦੁ ਦੀਪਕ ਬਨੇ ਤਾਰਿਕਾ ਮੰਡਲ ਜਨਕ ਮੋਤੀ ॥ In the first discursive formation there is a movement from cosmology to anthropology, in the second, the architectonic structure is in the reverse order.

In the eighteenth century, French philosophers used to explicate the present, prevalent inequalities and injustices by posting a hypothetical zero state of society, followed by progressive states of deterioration. This is how Rousseau derived and described the social and political problems of the eighteenth century Europe. Condillac and his disciple, Destutt de Tracy similarly traced the linguistic and semiological constructs from the so-called zero state of language. When for the first time, human language was created, where there was a perfect correspondence between the words and the objects they referred to. The reunions of the signifiers and the signified presented a perfect harmony in all human communication—social, political and linguistic.

Three hundred years before this logical exercise, in the fifteenth century, Guru Nanak juxtaposed cosmology against anthropology and delineated a progressive deterioration in all spheres of social, cultural and religious life of his countrymen, of humanity at large. Once upon a time, long long ago, it was all dark, all silence, a cosmic immobility. There was no day, no night, no sun to set, to rise, no men, no women, no castes, no creeds, no discriminations, no frivolous disputes :

ਅਰਬਦ ਨਰਬਦ ਹੁੰਧੁਕਾਰਾ ॥  
ਧਰਣਿ ਨ ਗਗਨਾ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਅਪਾਰਾ ॥  
ਨਾ ਦਿਨੁ ਰੈਨਿ ਨ ਚੰਦੁ ਨ ਸੂਰਜੁ  
ਸੁੰਨ ਸਮਾਧਿ ਲਗਾਇਦਾ ॥  
ਖਾਣੀ ਨ ਬਾਣੀ ਪਉਣ ਨ ਪਾਣੀ ॥  
ਓਪਤਿ ਖਪਤਿ ਨ ਆਵਣ ਜਾਣੀ ॥  
ਖੰਡ ਪਤਾਲ ਸਪਤਿ ਨਹੀ ਸਾਗਰ  
ਨਦੀ ਨ ਨੀਰੁ ਵਹਾਇਦਾ ॥  
ਨਾ ਤਦਿ ਸੁਰਗੁ ਮਛੁ ਪਇਆਲਾ ॥  
ਦੋਜਕੁ ਭਿਸਤੁ ਨਹੀ ਧੈ ਕਾਲਾ ॥  
ਨਰਕੁ ਸੁਰਗੁ ਨਹੀ ਜੀਮਣੁ ਮਰਣਾ  
ਨਾ ਕੋ ਆਇ ਨ ਜਾਇਦਾ ॥  
ਬ੍ਰਹਮਾ ਬਿਸਨੁ ਮਹੇਸ਼ੁ ਨ ਕੋਈ ॥  
ਅਵਰੁ ਨ ਦੀਸੈ ਏਕੋ ਸੋਈ ॥  
ਨਾਰਿ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਨਹੀ ਜਾਤ ਨ ਜਨਮਾ  
ਨਾ ਕੋ ਦੁਖੁ ਸੁਖੁ ਪਾਇਦਾ ॥

(ਮਾਰੂ, ਸੋਲਹੇ, ਮ. ੧, ਪੰਨਾ 1035)

long long ago  
millions of years ago  
it was all dark  
there were neither earth nor sky  
neither day, nor night  
neither sun, nor moon  
there were neither growth nor decay  
neither language, nor speech  
neither air, nor water  
there were neither life, nor death  
none came, none left  
there were neither language, nor speech  
neither oceans, nor rivers  
there were neither heavens, nor hells  
neither death with its horrors  
there were neither birth nor beginnings  
neither this, nor that world  
no movement of souls  
there were neither Brahma  
nor Vishnu, nor Shiva  
there were neither men, nor women  
no caste, no division  
no pain, no distress  
there were neither ascetics  
*nor householders*  
neither yogis, nor jangams  
neither cheatings, nor deceptions  
there were neither austerities,  
nor rituals  
neither empty prayers,  
nor pretentions  
there were no movement,  
no disturbance  
*neither purities, nor impurities*  
no rolling of sacred beads  
there were neither gopis, no Krishna  
no shepherds either  
nobody tried to deceive anybody  
none born in any caste, any creed  
there were neither maya, nor illusion  
neither time, nor space

neither hate, nor love  
 no false praise, no deception  
 there were neither Gorak, nor Machhander  
 no endless disputes  
 no frivolous discussions  
 there were no Brahmans, no Khatris  
 no gods, no temple  
 no cows, no worships  
 there were neither sacred places, nor rivers  
 no holy dips, no money changers  
 there were neither Mullahs, nor Qazis  
 no Sheikhs, no Hajis  
 there were neither kings, nor kingdoms  
 neither prides, nor humiliations  
 there were neither friends, nor enemies  
 neither fathers, nor mothers  
 there were neither merchants, nor clients  
 nor any business of falsity  
 there were neither Veda, no Quran  
 neither priests, nor qazis  
 no discussions, no disputes  
 there was no sun to set, to rise  
 there were no time, no space  
 and then as He willed  
 it was done  
 there was light, there was darkness  
 there was day, there was night  
 the creator, the measurer, the destroyer  
 came into being  
 the universe was created  
 there was life, there was death  
 a few were graced  
 by His truth, by His love...

The architectonic structure of this conceptual construct presents a series of negative propositions to demonstrate the progressive deterioration of social and spiritual life of humanity. All that is once upon a time did not exist. The conceptual opposition of this existence and non-existence of being and nothingness, of absolute void, *shunya* and extreme disturbance in the space charged with the sacred and the profane point to a natural order, an inevitable logical conclusion of

historical progression. And yet, the underlying discourse is manifest all over. What is and what it has led to need not have been the way we have today. Progressively, Guru Nanak continues to present a proposition of an event, a happening, an advent of a new movement, social, political or religious and then draws the logical consequence it led to. In this long composition, the Guru advances the most ruthless critique of all religions and anthropological hypocrisy that was unfortunately the hallmark of social life throughout the centuries. The historical progression was nothing but the progressive degeneration of the religiosity of religions, of the spirituality of the guardian of the sacred and the profane. The anthropological interventions in the cosmic order resulted in this chaos and corruption. In no uncertain terms, the Guru underscore the multiple currents in all spheres, spiritual and social that are responsible for this state of affairs, that could and should have been rectified with truth and love and the grace of the Almighty.

In ਗਗਨ ਮੈ ਥਾਲੁ ਰਵਿ ਚੰਦੁ ਦੀਪਕ ਬਨੇ ਤਾਰਿਕਾ ਮੰਡਲ ਜਨਕ ਮੋਤੀ the discursive order is reversed. The legend has it that Guru Nanak refused to participate in the ritual *arti* at the temple of Jagannath. To the anthropology of religion he juxtaposed the cosmology of religion and presented his own *arti*, his own cosmic vision :

ਗਗਨ ਮੈ ਥਾਲੁ ਰਵਿ ਚੰਦੁ ਦੀਪਕ ਬਨੇ  
ਤਾਰਿਕਾ ਮੰਡਲ ਜਨਕ ਮੋਤੀ ॥  
ਧੂਪੁ ਮਲਆਨਲੋ ਪਵਣੁ ਚਵਰੋ ਕਰੇ  
ਸਗਲ ਬਨਰਾਇ ਫੂਲੰਤ ਜੋਤੀ ॥  
ਕੈਸੀ ਆਰਤੀ ਹੋਇ ਭਵਖੰਡਨਾ ਤੇਰੀ ਆਰਤੀ ॥  
ਅਨਹਤਾ ਸਬਦ ਵਾਜੰਤ ਭੇਰੀ ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥  
ਸਹਸ ਤਵ ਨੈਨ ਨਨ ਨੈਨ ਹੈ ਤੋਹਿ ਕਉ  
ਸਹਸ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਨਨਾ ਏਕ ਤੋਹੀ ॥  
ਸਹਸ ਪਦ ਬਿਮਲ ਨਨ ਏਕ ਪਦ ਗੰਧ ਬਿਨੁ  
ਸਹਸ ਤਵ ਗੰਧ ਇਵ ਚਲਤ ਮੋਹੀ ॥  
ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਹੈ ਸੋਇ  
ਤਿਸਕੈ ਚਾਨਣਿ ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਚਾਨਣੁ ਹੋਇ ॥  
ਗੁਰ ਸਾਖੀ ਜੋਤਿ ਪਰਗਟੁ ਹੋਇ  
ਜੋ ਤਿਸੁ ਭਾਵੈ ਸੁ ਆਰਤੀ ਹੋਇ ॥  
ਹਰਿ ਚਰਣ ਕਮਲ ਮਕਰੰਦ ਲੋਭਿਤ ਮਨੋ

ਅਨ ਦਿਨੋ ਮੋਹਿ ਆਹੀ ਪਿਆਸਾ ॥  
 ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਜਲੁ ਦੇਹਿ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਾਰੰਗ ਕਉ  
 ਹੋਇ ਜਾ ਤੇ ਤੇਰੈ ਨਾਮਿ ਵਾਸਾ ॥

(ਰਾਗ ਧਨਾਸਰੀ, ਮ. ੧, ਪੰਨਾ 663)

the whole universe prays for you  
 the skies sense as the vast plateau  
 where the sun and the moon  
 burn as two lamps  
 and the stars twinkle to lit the sky  
 there is the incense of the woods  
 and the east and the west winds  
 sweep the extensive spaces  
 with the fragrance of your gardens  
 what a wonderful spectacle it is  
 what splendid worship  
 of the Lord of life and death  
 all souls vibrate with the inner music  
 there are millions of eyes  
 millions of forms  
 merged in your eternal Form  
 there are millions of faces  
 millions of silhouettes  
 all form a part of the universal gaze  
 there are million of lights within  
 pushing darkness into extreme recesses  
 the eternal lamp  
 burns for ever  
 to worship the Lord of the universe  
 the human heart  
 the little bird,  
 the being, is thirsty  
 longing to drink the nectar of the Guru  
 Nanak prays for  
 universal peace and prosperity...

The two compositions present the two sides of the same conceptual construct. In the former we are led progressively to the historical degeneration, to the anthropological inequalities and injustices, to social, political and religious chaos. The Cosmic peace and tranquility are juxtaposed against anthropological upheavals, to the state of terrible affairs we are in. Corruption and chaos, deception and destruction are

the order of the day. Religion is reduced to mere rites and ceremonies, mere *maryādā*, division and disputes.

In the *arti* that the Guru juxtaposes to this chaotic state of anthropology, there is the cosmic vision of universe, of nature, of humanity enjoying the eternal bliss. The cosmic order is the natural order, the human order that elevates, that leads human beings to sublime heights. The anthropological order is the order of false rituals, of dresses and diets, of corrupt practices, of divisions and disputes of cruelty and misery. However, within this space of anthropology and cosmology there is a dialectical interrelation. Within the anthropological order there is the possibility of ethical conduct, truth, love and grace. The metonymic, ritual behaviour can be replaced by metaphorical sublimation. The movement towards the cosmological domain is a movement of sublimity that does not lose touch with the harsh realities of earthly life. There is always a certain concordance of the world within and the world without, within the microcosm and the macrocosm. This conceptual construct of the Guru does not separate the human from the divine, anthropology from cosmology. In fact, it presents a certain equilibrium, a certain harmony of the two spaces.

I would like to conclude my presentation with an anecdote. Once Mardana, the disciple of Guru Nanak asked his Master :

My dear Baba, the Sage, The great Master  
you have been critical  
of temples, of mosques  
of Hindus, of Muslims  
of sadhus, of sidhas

...      ...      ...  
are you sure  
your followers will listen  
to what you preach  
what you discern and discourse ?

The venerable Baba Nanak is supposed to have replied :

no, my dear Mardana  
I have no illusions  
humanity is like the tail of a dog  
it can never be straightened  
my followers will also be  
caught in the snares of Maya

in the mire of classes and castes  
they will fight for *gaddis*, for *deras*  
replete with rites and rituals  
their houses of worship  
will be no different  
from the temples and the mosques  
they will bother more  
about dress and diet  
than truth and love  
they will worship the Granth  
but will never reflect on  
what is written in it  
they will have no time  
for meditation and introspection  
for honest and true deeds....



# THE MAKING OF GURU GRANTH SAHIB

*J. S. Grewal*

## I

*A Short History of the Sikhs* published jointly by Teja Singh and Ganda Singh in 1951 and reprinted by the Punjabi University in 1989 takes a longer notice of Guru Granth Sahib than what is expected in a general history. In fact, their statement is so comprehensive that it can serve as a starting point for the making of Guru Granth Sahib.<sup>1</sup>

Their story begins with Guru Nanak. His own hymns were sung for congregational worship in his lifetime. Three kinds of scripts were current then : Sharda in Kashmir, Takri in the eastern hills, and Bhatakshri in the plains. He adopted a modified form of Bhatakshri for his Bāṇī. His Āsā Pattī contains exactly 35 letters, including the letter *ṛ* which is peculiar to the script. It was popularized by Guru Angad as Gurmukhi for recording the words fallen 'from the mouth of his Guru'. That Guru Angad had with him the compositions of Guru Nanak is evident from a comparison of their hymns. The nucleus of the Sikh scripture had thus begun to be formed with the Bāṇī of Guru Nanak recorded in Gurmukhi.<sup>2</sup>

According to Teja Singh and Ganda Singh Guru Angad left his own compositions for Guru Amar Das, together with those of Guru Nanak and some Bhagats. The compositions of Guru Amar Das were put together by his grandson, Sahansar Ram. That Guru Amar Das had with him the compositions of Guru Nanak is clear from a comparison of their hymns. Guru Amar Das made a selection from the compositions of the Bhagats whom he used to admire earlier as a Vaishnava. Here and there he added his own commentary. The volumes prepared by Guru Amar Das were later used by Guru Arjan for the compilation of the Holy Granth. Guru Amar Das declared the Guru's Word to be superior to all the scriptures of the world. The Sikhs were enjoined to use only the Guru's Word for worship. Distinct from the six systems of the Hindus, the Guru's system was unequalled. Adopted with love, it could save the

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whole world.<sup>3</sup>

Teja Singh and Ganda Singh state that, since the most obvious religious practice for the Sikhs was the singing of the Guru's Word, and all other ceremonies or rituals were excluded, the clever persons like Prithi Chand began to mix up their own spurious writings with the true compositions of the Gurus to make them current among the Sikhs. There was a danger of confusion in the creed and the ritual. Guru Arjan was keen to ensure unity of belief and practice. Therefore, he undertook to collect the genuine writings of his predecessors together with his own to prepare a grand volume. He personally went to Goindval to acquire from Baba Mohan the manuscripts in his possession. These manuscripts in two volumes remained in the possession of the descendants of Guru Amar Das till the twentieth century. One of these, bearing the date 1595, was in Ahiapur, a village in Hoshiarpur district. However, these manuscripts did not contain all the writings included in the Holy Granth. Guru Arjan had to explore other sources to get the complete works he required.<sup>4</sup>

Selections from the writings of Hindu and Muslim saints like Kabir, Farid, Namdev, Ravidas, and Bhikhan, most of whom belonged to the so called depressed or untouchable classes, were made by Guru Arjan for inclusion in the Granth. This selection was based on 'the lyrical and living value of the pieces', and not on their doctrinal content. The idea of making this selection was 'inherent in the cosmopolitan nature of Sikhism'. The process had begun with its founder. The fact that many of Kabir's expressions are embedded in the writings of Guru Nanak shows that he had Kabir's writings with him. Similarly, some couplets of Farid are embedded in Guru Nanak's writings. There is a similar identity or correspondence between the expressions of Kabir and Farid on the one hand and those of Guru Angad, Guru Amar Das and Guru Ram Das on the other. This could be explained only by 'the supposition that the predecessors of Guru Arjan had before them the writings of these Bhagats'. Guru Arjan, thus, was not the first to think of making a collection of their verses. He enlarged the corpus and gave 'a scriptural position' to Bhagat Bani.<sup>5</sup>

Some of the Bhagat Bani was collected afresh from the followers of the saints in the Punjab, which accounts for the Punjabi flavour of

the language of their hymns in the Holy Granth. Many other saints requested Guru Arjan to include their compositions in the Granth, but without success. They were rejected either because of their Vedantic leanings or because of their hatred for the world, or for women. Among the rejected compositions were those of Kahna, Chhajju, Shah Husain, and Pilo. Guru Arjan wanted to inculcate healthy optimism and joy in worldly duties and responsibilities, but neither tearful ecstaticism nor other-worldliness. For similar reasons Guru Arjan rejected those musical modes which were calculated to work the mind to extremes of joy or sadness, like Megh and Hindol, or Jog and Deepak. Significantly, nine odes (*vārs*) were actually set to the martial strains of the well-known heroic ballads.<sup>6</sup>

The selected material was reduced to writing by Bhai Gurdas at the dictation of Guru Arjan. Arranged on the basis of Rags, the writings of the Gurus came first in the order of their succession, each calling himself by the common appellation of 'Nanak'. Then followed the writings of the saints, beginning with Kabir and ending with Farid whenever a piece from him was available. Towards the end, after the *shlokas* of Kabir and Farid, came the *savvyyas* of the contemporary bards (*bhatts*) who sum up the characteristics of the Gurus. The long Coronation Ode (*vār*) of Satta and Balvand, a short piece (*sadd*) of Sundar on the death of Guru Amar Das, and a few lines of Mardana were also included in the Granth. The *shlokas* left over from the Vārs came before the closing epilogue in which Guru Arjan comments on the importance and significance of the Holy Granth. In this dish are placed three things : Truth, Harmony, and Wisdom; these are seasoned with the Name of God, the ground of all; whoever tastes it will be saved. The Granth was meant for the regeneration of mankind. Its compilation was 'the greatest work' of Guru Arjan's life. Begun after 1595, it was completed in 1604. The Granth was then installed in the central Temple at Amri'sar, and Baba Buddha was appointed its first Granthi or custodian. 'The hymns of the Gurus which are before us', said Bhai Gurdas, 'are superior to the Vedas and the Quran'.<sup>7</sup>

According to Teja Singh and Ganda Singh, the Holy Granth prepared by Guru Arjan came into Dhir Mal's possession and remained with his descendants at Kartarpur.<sup>8</sup> It was brought to its 'present final form' by

Guru Gobind Singh by adding the hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur under different Rags. The view that Guru Gobind Singh reproduced the whole Adi Granth from memory during his stay at Talwandi Sabo, now called Damdama Sahib and often described as the Guru's Kashi, finds no support in the works of the Sikh writers. In fact, there is a copy of the Holy Granth at Patna, bearing the date 1691, which contains the hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur in their proper places. Another such copy found at Dacca had been inscribed in 1675, the first year of Guru Gobind Singh's accession. This does not mean, however, that the Holy Granth was not re-edited at Damdama Sahib. It was, and four hymns were added under So-Purkh; certain unauthorized pieces, which had crept in at the end of some copies, were expunged; and certain spellings were amended. Then, before the end of his life in 1708, Guru Gobind Singh told the Khalsa that the Panth henceforth was to be guided by the teachings of the Gurus incorporated in the Holy Granth.<sup>9</sup>

Authenticated by Guru Gobind Singh, the Granth came to be known as Guru Granth Sahib in the early eighteenth century as the logical culmination of a process that had started much earlier. The Guru in essence represented the Word and the Congregation: 'a mystic unity was established between the Word and the Guru on the one hand, and the Guru and the Sikh on the other'. Great respect began to be paid to the incorporated Word; even the Guru used to have a seat lower than that of the Scripture. At the same time, the Sikh congregations acquired great sanctity due to the belief that the spirit of the Guru lived and moved among them. 'They began to assume higher and higher authority, until collectively the whole body, called the Panth, came to be regarded as an embodiment of the Guru'. It was in this context that Guru Gobind Singh received baptism from the Sikhs initiated by him. He separated the personal and the scriptural aspects of Guruship. 'The one he gave to the Khalsa and the other to the Holy Granth. Both acquired the title of Guru, and were to be addressed as Guru Granth and Guru Panth'.<sup>10</sup>

The most striking feature of his statement by Teja Singh and Ganda Singh is the strictly historical approach to the genesis and evolution of the Sikh scripture from the time of Guru Nanak to the time of Guru Gobind Singh. They underscore the intrinsic need and fundamental significance of Guru Granth Sahib. They base their arguments as much

on the external evidence of Sikh works and Sikh scriptural manuscripts as on the internal evidence of Gurbani. They appreciate the relevance of early manuscripts, especially the Goindval Pothis, for the compilation of the Holy Granth by Guru Arjan. They appreciate the role of the manuscript copies of the Holy Granth in the preparation of the final version of the Scripture by Guru Gobind Singh. The Holy Granth prepared by Guru Arjan and the Damdami Bīr prepared by Guru Gobind Singh were intimately linked with each other. The status of the Granth as the Guru was linked up with the Sikh conception of the Word (*shabad*).

## II

Looking for the earliest references to the Granth we find that some manuscripts of the second half of the seventeenth century refer to the Granth of the fifth Guru inscribed by Bhai Gurdas.<sup>11</sup> A *Rahitnāma* of the early eighteenth century refers to the Granth Sahib prepared by Bhai Gurdas on Guru Arjan's dictation because the Miñās, Prithi Chand and his son Miharban, had started preparing their own Bāñi.<sup>12</sup> This *Rahitnāma* refers also to a message of Guru Gobind Singh to the grandson of Dhir Mal at Kartarpur that the Granth Sahib in his possession may be sent to him. The Sodhi at Kartarpur refused to comply.<sup>13</sup>

In the second half of the eighteenth century, Kesar Singh Chhibber states that Miharban appropriated the epithet 'Nanak' for his own compositions, and the Miñās compiled a *granth*, containing the *shabads* of the first four Gurus. They were keen to establish their right to Guruship. When Guru Arjan heard a Sikh reciting a *shabad* of Miharban he told Bhai Gurdas to draw a clear line between authentic Bāñi and the spurious compositions of the Miñās.<sup>14</sup> That was why the *Adi Granth* was compiled. Chhibber refers to Guru Hargobind instructing the Sikhs to read the Granth-Pothi in *dharmsāls*.<sup>15</sup> When Dhir Mal refused to lend the Granth to Guru Gobind Singh, he got a new copy prepared.<sup>16</sup> He declared the Granth to be the Guru.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, the Sikh of the Guru should live in accordance with the teachings of Guru Granth Sahib, says Chhibber.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, the Tenth Master had given the *gaddi* of Guruship to Granth Sahib. Chhibber goes on to add that the Granth of Guru Arjan and the Granth of Guru Gobind Singh were not to be bound together, but they were like real brothers and both could be regarded as

Guru. The elder was the Tikka Guru.<sup>19</sup> Chhibber reiterates towards the end of his work, however, that the Adi Granth was the Guru in his time; not to recognize this was to be a reprobate (*bemukh*).<sup>20</sup> The true Sikh believes in the truth of the Guru Granth.<sup>21</sup>

Sarup Das Bhalla, a direct descendant of Guru Amar Das, makes a more comprehensive statement on the making of Guru Granth Sahib. Guru Arjan decided to prepare a distinctive Granth for a distinctive Panth. He told Bhai Gurdas to collect the Bāṇi of all the Gurus and the Bhagats, and to separate the true Bāṇi from the false. Bhai Gurdas submitted that all the Pothīs in the possession of Sansram, son of Guru Amar Das's son Mohan, should be obtained first and then other Bāṇi should be collected to compile the Granth. Guru Arjan sent a *purohit* to bring Pothīs from Sansram but Sansram refused to part with the Pothīs dear to him as his life. Guru Arjan composed a *chhant* in praise of Baba Mohan and went to him with Satta Rababi and some Sikhs. When the *chhant* was sung, Baba Mohan asked Guru Arjan the purpose of his visit. Guru Arjan mentioned his intention of giving a Granth to the Panth. Baba Mohan told Sansram to hand over the Pothīs to Guru Arjan. The remaining Bāṇi was then collected from all possible places. Sarup Das Bhalla gives the *sākhī* of Paira Mokha's visit to the capital of Raja Shiv Nabh for obtaining the *Prān Sangalī* which eventually, however, was consigned to the river.<sup>22</sup> Inspired by Guru Arjan, Bhai Gurdas started the process of selection and writing. He prepared the Granth, sifting the authentic Gurbani from spurious compositions.<sup>23</sup>

When it came to Bhagat Bani, Bhai Gurdas began to suspect that Guru Arjan himself was composing Bāṇi in the name of different Bhagats. Therefore, Guru Arjan revealed to Bhai Gurdas the Bhagats sitting behind a curtain. He was asked to accompany them to bid farewell to them. He walked with them for some distance and then bowed his head to say farewell. He could see none of them when he raised his head. They had instantly vanished. Among them were Ramanand, Kabir, Ravidas, Namdev, Sadhna, Sen, Trilochan, Pipa, Jai Dev, Dhanna, Beni, Parmanand, Mirabai, Bhikhan, Surdas, and Shaikh Farid. Guru Arjan told Bhai Gurdas that they had come on their own to request him to include their Bāṇi in the Granth in order to remain close to the Gurus.<sup>24</sup>

According to Sarup Das Bhalla, Shah Husain and Chajju Bhagat

came to see Guru Arjan. He asked Chhajju to recite his compositions, but Chhajju remarked that he was merely a moth before the sun. Guru Arjan appreciated his humility. Shah Husain recited his composition, beginning with the line : *sajnā bolan dī jā nāhī*. Guru Arjan was pleased with Shah Husain and blessed him with love and *giān*. Kahna came to Guru Arjan and insisted that his compositions should be included in the Granth. He recited a composition, identifying himself with God. Guru Arjan found it unsuitable for inclusion. Kahna threatened to complain to the emperor, but died before he reached Lahore. Due to his enmity towards the Guru who was devoid of all enmity (*nirvair*), he had lost all merit.<sup>25</sup>

Bhai Banno, a devoted Sikh, came for *darshan* of the Granth and requested Guru Arjan to allow him to prepare a copy. The Guru did not disregard the wish of a devout Sikh, and gave the Granth to Bhai Banno on the condition that he should bring it back immediately when asked to do so. Bhai Banno took it to his village Khara and the *sangat* paid homage to the Granth. He had not yet started getting it copied when a messenger came from the Guru. Bhai Banno started immediately on his journey but covered only half a *kos* every day to gain time for copying. He employed several scribes to complete the work, which resulted in certain *shabads* being entered at wrong places. This copy (*misl*) became somewhat different from that of Bhai Gurdas. Called *khāre kī misl*, it was approved by Guru Arjan as authentic (*sahī*).<sup>26</sup>

In the eyes of Sarup Das Bhalla, the Granth prepared by Guru Arjan was the only means of liberation in Kaljug. It was placed in a separate room and all began to bow to it with reverence.<sup>27</sup> When the Sikhs asked Guru Gobind Singh just before the end of his life who would take his place, he told them to regard the Granth Sahib as the Guru in his place. ‘Whoever wishes to talk to me should read the Adi Granth Sahib. That would be the way of conversing with me’.<sup>28</sup>

The nineteenth century Sikh writers elaborated, or modified, the various elements in Sarup Das Bhalla’s account of the making of Guru Granth Sahib. Bhai Santokh Singh, for example, narrates the story of Paīṛa Mokha with a slight variation. He refers to the remark of a Sikh before Guru Arjan that Prithia was composing his own verses under the name of ‘Nanak’, and Guru Arjan decided to compile the Granth to

preserve authentic Bāṇi for all times to save the world. Guru Arjan's visit to Baba Mohan is narrated more elaborately. Fifteen Bhagats approach Guru Arjan with their compositions and Kabir speaks on their behalf. Guru Arjan tells them to compose all afresh in accordance with Rags. They compose new hymns and Bhai Gurdas records them with Guru Arjan's approval. To allay his suspicion, Guru Arjan shows the Bhagats to him and bestows upon him the ability to speak to them. Kahna's verse is rejected because of his pride; Pilo's, because of its gloom; and Shah Husain's verse is rejected because of its implied inaction. Two Shloks of Guru Nanak in his own hand are brought by two *pandits* of Kashi. Guru Arjan puts his stamp on the Granth with his Mundavani hymn. The poet Alam's *Rāgmālā* was added to the Granth by some Sikh. Bhai Santokh Singh refers then to Bhai Banno's episode with a slight variation.<sup>29</sup>

Giani Gian Singh reiterates Sarup Das Bhalla's idea that Guru Arjan's purpose in compiling the Granth was to give a scripture to the Sikh Panth as a distinctive religious community in the world. As indicated by Guru Nanak himself, his Bāṇi represented divine revelation. Guru Arjan compiled the Bāṇi of the Gurus in succession according to Rags, indicating the authorship by 'mahila 1', 'mahila 2', and so on. Their Bāṇi was followed by that of the Bhagats. The compositions of the Bhatts and Alam's *Rāgmālā* were also included in the Granth. In Giani Gian Singh's view, Bhagat Bani was probably selected from the Goindval Pothīs. The work of compilation started in 1602 and it was completed in 1604. Banno was assigned the task of getting it bound in Lahore; he got it copied, adding the *Ratanmālā* and some other compositions of Guru Nanak. Guru Arjan called it 'brackish' (*khārī*) and it was in the possession of Bhai Banno's descendants in the village Mangat. The Adi Granth written by Bhai Gurdas was with the Sodhis of Kartarpur.<sup>30</sup> On Dhir Mal's refusal to lend it to Guru Gobind Singh, the Guru prepared from memory a new Bīṛ at Damdama Sahib (Talwandi Sabo).

In the light of the Sikh writings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries we can see that Teja Singh and Ganda Singh took the Sikh tradition seriously but not uncritically. The intrinsic need and concern for the authenticity of Gurbani, the use of Goindval Pothis for the compilation of the Granth (which was in the possession of the Sodhis of



Kartarpur) together with other sources, rejection of the compositions of Kahna, Shah Husain and Pilo, reverence for the Granth upon its compilation, and vesting of Guruship in the Granth—all come from the Sikh tradition. However, Bhagat Bani does not come from the Bhagats personally. Paira Mokha is mentioned but not in connection with the *Prān Sangalī*. Bhai Banno does not figure anywhere. Guru Gobind Singh does not reproduce the Granth from memory but uses manuscript copies for preparing the Damdami Bīr in which some additional hymns (apart from the hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur and a Shloka of his own) are included, and from which certain other compositions are excluded. Evidently, Teja Singh and Ganda Singh are neither sceptical nor gullible in their attitude to the evidence presented by the eighteenth and nineteenth Sikh writers on the making of Guru Granth Sahib.

### III

The early twentieth century witnessed some new developments in relation to Guru Granth Sahib. Bhai Vir Singh's father, Dr Charan Singh, wrote his *Bāṇī Beorā* to describe the contents of Guru Granth Sahib which had begun to be printed in the late nineteenth century on the basis of a Damdami Bīr. In this process he noticed a new tradition, which he called Lahauri; it was different from the well known traditions of Kartarpur and Mangat.<sup>31</sup>

Under the leadership of Babu Teja Singh, the Panch Khalsa Diwan of Bhasaur raised the issue of the *Rāgmālā*, which gave rise to a serious controversy. In fact, a new edition of the Granth Sahib without the *Rāgmālā* was printed by the Panch Khalsa Diwan for limited circulation. The Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee supported the critics of the Panch Khalsa Diwan and resolved to excommunicate Babu Teja Singh in the late 1920s. A significant feature of the controversy about the *Rāgmālā* was the evidence of old manuscripts used, both for and against the inclusion of the *Rāgmālā* in Guru Granth Sahib.<sup>32</sup>

G.B. Singh brought scriptural manuscripts into sharp focus in 1944 by publishing his *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib diān Prachīn Bīṛān*, describing nearly forty scriptural manuscripts. In its first part he discussed the need of the scripture, the search for its materials, and the method of its compilation. He reiterated that the purpose of compiling the Granth was to separate the authentic Bāṇī from inauthentic compositions. In

his view, a collection of Guru Nanak's Bāṇi was made in his lifetime but this collection came into the possession of Sri Chand and was immersed in the Ravi with his dead body. Much of Guru Angad's Bāṇi, and the Bāṇi of Guru Nanak, was probably collected by Amar Das with the help of Guru Angad himself. The Bāṇi of Guru Amar Das too was available in the Goindval Pothis. The Bāṇi of Guru Ram Das, like his own, was already with Guru Arjan. He approached Sikh Sangats, Rababis, Sikh Parcharaks, and other Sikhs fond of Gurbani for collecting the Bāṇi of Guru Nanak not included in the Goindval Pothis. Some of the Bhagat Bani had been collected by Guru Amar Das. The rest was collected by Guru Arjan himself from the followers of the Bhagats. Some of them probably themselves offered the Bani of their *gurūs* for inclusion in the Granth. The compositions of the Bhattas came from their descendants. The whole material was corrected, edited, and compiled under Guru Arjan's supervision and it was inscribed by Bhai Gurdas. Guru Arjan himself wrote the Mūlmantar. The Jap in the hand of Guru Ram Das was copied by Bhai Gurdas. The other contents were added part by part as they became available after corrections. The Granth contained some of the instructions given by Guru Arjan. The entire work must have taken a year or two.<sup>33</sup>

However, in G.B. Singh's view, neither the Granth prepared by Guru Arjan nor any earlier manuscript was extant. The Guru Harsahai Pothi, one of the manuscripts described by G.B. Singh, was in his view a copy of the original Granth made in the time of Guru Har Rai. It could not be the one possessed by Miharban and it was certainly not a collection of the time of Guru Nanak as claimed by the descendants of Prithi Chand. Two Pothīs were prepared by Sahansar Ram, son of Mohan, with the permission of Guru Amar Das. Much of the Bāṇi of Guru Nanak in these Pothīs had been collected from Rababis, Sikhs, and other sources. Since both the Pothīs were compiled in the lifetime of Guru Amar Das they could not contain the Bāṇi of Guru Ram Das. But they could have the compositions of Kabir, Namdev and other Bhagats, and some spurious compositions. The extant Goindval Pothis could not have served as the prototype for Guru Arjan's Granth.<sup>34</sup>

Like many other Sikh scholars, G.B. Singh believed that there were three main branches of scriptural manuscripts: one, inscribed by Bhai Sri Satguru Jagjit Singh Ji eLibrary NamdhariLibrary@gmail.com

Gurdas under Guru Arjan's guidance; two, its copy made by Bhai Banno; and three, the authoritative scripture prepared by Guru Gobind Singh at Damdama Sahib. According to G.B. Singh, Bhai Gurdas wālī Bīṛ was with Guru Arjan when Akbar met him at Kartarpur in 1598. Therefore, it must have been prepared before 1598, in all probability in 1591. The contest between Dhir Mal and Guru Tegh Bahadur over the Bīṛ resulted in its loss permanently in 1665. In other words, the Bīṛ in the possession of the Sodhis of Kartarpur was not authentic. Indeed, it was a copy of Bhai Banno's Bīṛ. What was, and what was not, there in Bhai Gurdas wālī Bīṛ could be surmised on the basis of the known manuscripts.<sup>35</sup>

In reaction to G.B. Singh's work, Bhai Jodh Singh wrote a number of articles in the *Khālsā Samāchār* which became the basis of his *Prachīn Bīṛān Bare Bhullān dī Sodhan*, published in 1946. Bhai Jodh Singh pointed out that the Sikh scripture held a peculiar importance as Guru Granth Sahib. To cast doubt on its authenticity was to cut at the roots of the Sikh Panth. In Bhai Jodh Singh's view, the Kartarpuri Bīṛ was the one prepared by Guru Arjan and authenticated later by Guru Gobind Singh. Therefore to cast doubt on the authenticity of the Kartarpuri Bīṛ was to cast doubt on Guru Granth Sahib. G.B. Singh had seen neither the Goindval Pothis nor the Kartarpuri Bīṛ. A close examination of the manuscript at Kartarpur revealed that G.B. Singh's observations were Imaginary (*man-gharāt*), false (*kusatt*), unfair, and unjust. The vehemence with which Bhai Jodh Singh refuted G.B. Singh was partly due to the background of controversy over the *Rāgmālā*.<sup>36</sup>

Teja Singh and Ganda Singh, as we can see now, steer clear of the controversy about the authenticity of the Kartarpuri Bīṛ. Though they were surely aware of it, they saw no reason to reject the traditional Sikh view in this matter. However, the degree of importance which they give to the evidence of manuscripts was due to the fact that scriptural manuscripts had come into sharp focus by the mid-twentieth century.

#### IV

The second half of the twentieth century has been marked by protracted, and sometimes bitter, controversies with regard to the making of Guru Granth Sahib. The authenticity of the Kartarpuri Bīṛ in particular has been the subject of contention. The American missionaries, J.C.

Bīṛ and advocated its thorough study.<sup>37</sup> Bhai Jodh Singh's *Kartārpurī Bīṛ de Darshan*, published in 1968 partly in response to such expressions of doubt, was meant to establish that the Kartarpuri Bīṛ, with the *Rāgmālā* as its original part, was absolutely authentic.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, the sceptical argument was taken up by W.H. McLeod in his *Evolution of the Sikh Community* in 1975, and in some other works later.<sup>39</sup> Daljeet Singh wrote an essay on the .Kartarpuri Bīṛ to refute all arguments against its authenticity, including those of W.H. McLeod.<sup>40</sup> But even this did not put an end to the controversy. In fact Piar Singh refuted all the arguments of Daljeet Singh in his *Gāthā Srī Ādi Granth* in 1992.<sup>41</sup> More recently, Pashaura Singh has argued that the Kartarpuri Bīṛ is the one prepared by Guru Arjan. He appreciates Bhai Jodh Singh's work, and refers to Daljeet Singh's attitude as 'too dogmatic' in maintaining that the Kartarpuri Bīṛ contained 'the actual words uttered by the Gurus'.<sup>42</sup> In his own view, Guru Arjan introduced 'linguistic refinement' and 'other minor modifications' without changing the original meaning and rhythm of the hymns he revised in the final text.<sup>43</sup>

Like Teja Singh and Ganda Singh, Pashaura Singh looks upon Goindval Pothīs as relevant for the reparation of the Kartarpur Pothi. Whereas Teja Singh and Ganda Singh were relying on the earlier Sikh tradition reinforced by their awareness of the existence of two Pothis associated with Baba Mohan by his descendants, Pashaura Singh relies on recent scholarly work for information on the Goindval Pothis. According to him, the Pothīs prepared by Guru Amar Das were handed over to Guru Ram Das on his installation and he in turn left them for Guru Arjan, together with his own Bāṇi. Both of these were subsequently lost. The extant Goindval Pothis were not used by Guru Arjan for preparing the Kartarpur Pothi. But, being copies of the Pothīs prepared by Guru Amar Das, they are of fundamental importance for understanding the history of the textual evolution of the *Adi Granth*.<sup>44</sup>

Pashaura Singh looks upon the Sikh scriptural manuscripts as divided into three main branches : the Kartarpur tradition, the Lahore tradition, and the Banno tradition. All these three versions of the text were used by different groups in competition within the Panth. The Banno version, which contained the *Ratanmālā* and some other additional pieces, came to the fore during the second half of the seventeenth century due to Sri Satguru Jagjit Singh Ji eLibrary NamdhariElibrary@gmail.com

'political disturbance'. The Damdami Bīr was prepared by Guru Gobind Singh at Damdama in Anandpur Sahib (and not at Talwandi Sabo where he stayed much later) 'to standardize the text' after examining all the three versions. Nevertheless, the Banno version assumed 'predominance' in the turmoil of the eighteenth century when the Banno group, especially the Hindālīs, asserted their influence with the help of the Mughal officials. It was only in the early nineteenth century, when Maharaja Ranjit Singh began to patronize the Sodhis of Kartarpur, that the Kartarpuri Bīr became 'the touchstone for correcting the copies of the Adi Granth'. The Damdami version was revived and some of its 'beautiful copies' were now prepared as gifts for all the Sikh Takhts and other major Gurdwaras. The Banno version remained in use in parts of the west Punjab. The Damdami version was taken up by publishers in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century to make it the standard Sikh scripture.<sup>45</sup>

Teja Singh and Ganda Singh were possibly aware of the existence of the Guru Harsahai Pothi but make no mention of it. Pashaura Singh regards the earliest part of the Guru Harsahai Pathi as older than the Goindval Pothis and he takes notice of the fact that there was no *rāga* organization in the first section of the Pothi which contains the Bāṇi of Guru Nanak. However, the claim of the Sodhis of Guru Harsahai that the Pothi in their possession was originally compiled by Guru Nanak is open to question. Its Mūl-mantar referring to 'Baba Nanak' indicates that it was inscribed by a Sikh and not by the Guru himself. In any case, there is no adequate evidence to identify the Guru Harsahai Pothi with the one prepared in the lifetime of Guru Nanak. It could, however, be a later copy of the early corpus of Sikh scriptural tradition.<sup>46</sup>

Yet another scriptural manuscript was totally unknown to Teja Singh and Ganda Singh. This manuscript, MS 1245, was purchased by Guru Nanak Dev University in 1987 and noticed by Piar Singh in his *Gāthā* in 1992. On the basis entirely of internal evidence, Piar Singh regards it as an authentic manuscript, analyses it in great detail, and places its compilation in the early years of Guru Hargobind's Guruship. In his view, it was an independent compilation, having important similarities with the Goindval Pothis.<sup>47</sup> Pashaura Singh places its compilation between the Goindval Pothis and the Kartarpur Pothi, suggesting in

fact the year 1599. This volume does not contain Bhagat Bani as such, but it does contain certain compositions of Kabir. Pashaura Singh suggests that Guru Arjan had the intention of adding Bhagat Bani to this incomplete manuscript. Guru Arjan seems to have worked on several pre-canonical traditions to produce the first canonical text in the form of the Kartarpur Pothis. MS 1245 is one of the important documents used by Guru Arjan, reflecting the pre-canonical stage of Sikh scriptural tradition. 'Its textual relationship with the Goindval Pothis and the Kartarpur Pothis is quite obvious'.<sup>48</sup>

## V

Even more recently, Gurinder Singh Mann has gone into the history of the Kartarpur Pothis, its internal structure and contents, and its place in the transmission of the sacred corpus. According to him, Bhai Jodh Singh had worked in an atmosphere of fierce controversy over the existence of the *Rāgmālā* in the Adi Granth. To prove that the *Rāgmālā* was an integral part of the Kartarpur Pothis was for him to establish the authenticity of the Pothis themselves. Moreover, he treated every question about the authenticity of the Pothis as a challenge to Guru Granth Sahib. In Mann's view, discrepancies between the contents of the Kartarpur Pothis and the Guru Granth Sahib do not necessarily carry the implication that the former, or the latter, is inauthentic.<sup>49</sup> Mann gives weight to Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha's remark that the Kartarpur Pothis contained not only the *Rāgmālā* but also some other pieces like the *Ratanmālā*. These compositions are mentioned in the Kartarpur Pothis's table of contents. Copies professedly made from the Kartarpur Pothis include these compositions. Mann suggests, therefore, that these compositions were possibly removed at the time of rebinding the Kartarpur Pothis before Bhai Jodh Singh examined it nearly twentyfive years after Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha's remark.<sup>50</sup> Mann, thus, tries to meet all arguments against the authenticity of the Kartarpur Pothis.

Mann has examined the extant Goindval Pothis in detail and argued at length that originally four Pothis were prepared by Guru Amar Das. Two of them have survived. The sectarian statement carrying the date of 1595 in one of the two extant Pothis was inserted later in support of Bhalla's claims to Guruship. The fact that the corpus of Guru Amar Das's hymns in the Goindval Pothis and the Kartarpur Pothis is almost identical

indicates that the Goindval Pothis were compiled towards the end of Guru Amar Das's life. These Pothis were the primary source for the Kartarpur Pothi in terms of the actual corpus of sacred hymns and their arrangement in a particular order. Almost all hymns of Guru Nanak and Guru Amar Das in Kartarpur Pothi are available in the Goindval Pothis. However, between the Bāṇi of the Gurus and the compositions of the Bhagats there are over a dozen compositions of 'Gulām sadāsevak' who uses the epithet 'Nanak' for himself.<sup>51</sup> Mann's suggestion that these could be the compositions of Jeth Chand who later became Guru Ram Das is not satisfactory. However, this does not mean that Guru Arjan could not have these Pothis for preparing the Kartarpuri Bīr.

According to Gurinder Singh Mann, there were only two main branches of scriptural manuscripts in the seventeenth century. He argues in detail that the 'Lahore version' actually belongs to the Amritsar tradition which itself comes from the Kartarpuri Bīr, and Bhai Banno version is only one example of such copies made from the Kartarpuri Bīr. In other words, the Kartarpuri Bīr was the mainspring of all the seventeenth-century manuscripts falling into two branches. The first branch represented copies of a copy made in 1605, and the second branch represented copies made after 1606. The latter contained some additional compositions of Guru Arjan. The hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur were added to the text before 1675, that is, in his lifetime. On the opening folio of MS 1192, which has the complete corpus of Guru Tegh Bahadur's hymns, there is his attestation and the note that this attestation was obtained by presenting the manuscript to Guru Tegh Bahadur in the presence of the whole congregation on the full moon day of Jeth in Samat 1731. This phase of updating the text of the second branch of manuscripts was followed by the final stage in the 1680s. The compilation of the final version did not involve a simple addition of the hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur to the existing corpus but also probably the omission of a set of compositions available in the earlier manuscripts. This version, generally referred to as the Damdami, was seen as the canonical text in the central Sikh community in the closing decades of the seventeenth century.<sup>52</sup>

According to Mann, only two traditions were current during the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century : copies of the Damdami

version, and a version of the second branch of the seventeenth century manuscripts (with the hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur added to their texts). The latter remained current at places distant from the main centres of the Punjab and, unlike the manuscripts of the Damdami version, they were dated. Mann suggests that scribes continued the practice of recording the date of compilation at those places where the tradition of the Granth having become the Guru Granth Sahib was either unknown or rejected. There is no indication of any concerted attempt to redefine the emerging Sikh canon. The Damdami version achieved relative hegemony in the Sikh scriptural tradition at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The standard printed edition of Guru Granth Sahib is based on the Damdami tradition and the Kartarpur Pothi.<sup>53</sup>

Mann gives serious attention to the Guru Harsahai Pothi. He refers to Harji's claim in the second half of the seventeenth century that Guru Ram Das had given a Pothī of Guru Nanak to Guru Arjan who then gave it to Prithi Chand. According to Harji, this Pothī constituted the central component of the ceremony of *dastārbandī* in the family, and it was held in great reverence. Mann argues that circumstantial evidence and the contents of the Pothi lend some degree of credibility to the claim made by the Sodhis. The opening section of the Pothi can be dated to the 1530s. The second section evolved slowly when different segments were added to the manuscript later. By the time it was given to Prithi Chand, it contained the hymns of Guru Ram Das. That the second section was added before the Kartarpur Pothi but after the Goindwal Pothis is indicated by the fact that the Anand has 38 stanzas in the Goindwal Pothis, 39 in the Guru Harsahai Pothi, and 40 in the Kartarpur Pothi. The first section, even if it was a copy of the original Pothi of Guru Nanak, represented the earliest manuscript of the Sikh tradition. Therefore, Mann places it at the beginning of the Sikh scriptural tradition.<sup>54</sup>

Mann argues in favour of the compilation of MS1245 between the Goindval Pothis and the Kartarpur Pothi, around 1600. He does not agree with Piar Singh that it was an independent compilation; it could have been compiled only at the centre of the community. He does not agree with Pashaura Singh that MS 1245 is a draft. It was put forth as a finished document. Its crucial significance lies in its manifesting a



conception of Sikh scripture different from the type represented in the Goindval Pothis. Around 1600, Guru Arjan was considering either to drop the Bhagat Bani or to separate it from the compositions of the Sikhs to append it toward the end of the text. Since Guru Arjan decided eventually in favour of the older conception to prepare the Kartarpur Pothi, MS 1245 became irrelevant and it was allowed to sink into oblivion.<sup>55</sup> That this suggestion is not casually made is evident from the fact that Mann gives a separate chapter on the issue of Bhagat Bani. Just as a fundamental distinction was made between the Gurus and the Bhagats, so a clear distinction was made between Gurbani and Bhagat Bani. The Bhagats were comparable with the best of the Sikhs, but not with the Gurus.<sup>56</sup>

## VI

Balwant Singh Dhillon disagrees with both Pashaura Singh and Gurinder Singh Mann. He believes that a major or parent tradition of Gurbani in scribal form, as distinct from musical form, had originated in the time of Guru Nanak and flourished under his successors. The process of recording, compilation, and canonization 'did not take place once but over and over again for nearly a century, coming to an end with the codification of the *Adi Granth* in 1604'. In addition to the inherited writings, Guru Arjan had to sift many other sources available to him. To locate such sources a scholar has to be very careful because there were four other rival traditions of Gurbani : the Udasi, the Bhalla, the Miṇā, and the Hindālī.<sup>57</sup> In Dhillon's view neither Pashaura Singh nor Gurinder Singh Mann has been careful enough. He argues that the *Guru Harsahai Pothi* 'had its origin in the post *Adi Granth* period', and some of its internal features indicate that it did not belong to the parent tradition. It represented the tradition developed and nurtured by the Miṇās.<sup>58</sup> Similarly, the earliest possible date for the Goindval Pothis can be 1596, but more probably it was compiled in the seventeenth century. The extant Pothis owe their origin to the Bhalla tradition, and some of their features indicate a close connection with the Miṇās. Instead of representing the pre-scriptural tradition of the main Sikh stream, the Goindval Pothis represent a sectarian tradition. Their role 'in the codification of the *Adi Granth* is more imaginary than real'.<sup>59</sup> MS1245 is also a post *Adi Granth* manuscript, predominantly musical in nature.

It had nothing to do with the Kartarpur Pothe.<sup>60</sup> This leaves the Kartarpur Pothe as the first extant manuscript of the Sikh tradition. There were earlier canons in the history of the Sikh scripture, but there is no textual survival. Whatever the merit of Dhillon's scholarly attempt, it does not advance the story of the making of Guru Granth Sahib any further.

## VII

Pashaura Singh and Gurinder Singh Mann remain the only two successors of Teja Singh and Ganda Singh. They have tried to reconstruct the story of the making of Sikh scripture on the basis of empirical evidence. They remain close to Teja Singh and Ganda Singh in their commitment to the historical approach and their search for historical truth. Between themselves, the story given by Gurinder Singh Mann takes into account more empirical evidence; his analysis is more rigorous; and his presentation is more lucid. His story remains embedded in the texture of Sikh history and, essentially, it is closer to the statement of Teja Singh and Ganda Singh.

## REFERENCES AND NOTES

1. Teja Singh and Ganda Singh state that they have drawn upon the Holy Granth more widely than ever before : *A Short History of Sikhs*. Patiala : Punjabi University, 1989, Preface, p. iii. It may be added that their account of the making of Guru Granth Sahib is more comprehensive than that of the earlier historians.
2. *Ibid*, pp. 14, 17-18. Gurbani was sung by the musicians Satta and Balvand in the assembly of Sikhs in the time of Guru Angad. Their verses in honour of the first five Gurus, known as the Coronation Ode (*Vār Sattā Balvand*), later became a part of the Sikh scripture. Satta lived up to the time of Guru Hargobind. A manuscript copy of the Holy Granth, kept at the Dharamsala of Bhai Buta Singh in Rawalpindi, contained two passages in praise of Guru Hargobind : *ibid.*, p. 71 n 1. But they appear to be spurious : *ibid*, pp. 28-29 n 4.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23 & n 2. The authors elaborate the argument that Guru Amar Das, like Guru Angad, was thoroughly familiar with the hymns of Guru Nanak. They also add that with the integration of the Sikh doctrine, the Sikhs were becoming 'more and more self-contained in social matters'.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 28 & n 3. One such source was said to be the manuscript in the Dharamsala of Bhai Buta Singh in Rawalpindi. In the time of Guru Arjan, it formed only a small part of the later enlarged volume.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30. The authors cite examples of similarities between Kabir and Guru Nanak.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 28, 30-31.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 28, 30, 31, 32.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 49. The authors relate the story how the Granth was snatched from Dhir Mal by the followers of Guru Tegh Bahadur but returned to him by the Guru.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 31 n 3, 71-72, 74-75.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 105.
11. The scriptural manuscripts at Dehra Dun and Patna Sahib, for example, refer to the Granth of Guru Arjan that was inscribed by Bhai Gurdas.
12. *The Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama*, edited and translated by W.H. McLeod, Dunedin : University of Otago Press, 1987, p. 92.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
14. Kesar Singh Chhibber, *Bansāvalīnāma Dasān Pātshāhiān Kā*, ed. Ratan Singh Jaggi, *Parkh*, ed. S.S. Kohli, Chandigarh : Punjab University, 1972, p. 50.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 126.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 136, 163, 197.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 206. It is interesting to note that Gutkas and Pothis for Chibber were like 'sons and grandsons' of the Granth.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 214.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 221, 222.
22. Sarup Das Bhalla, *Mahimā Prakāsh*, ed. Gobind Singh Lamba and Khazan Singh, Patiala : Bhasha Vibhag, Punjab, 1971, pp. 358-61, 365-68.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 362-64. It is interesting to note that Baba Mohar is referred to as 'Mastān Sāhib' which reminds us of the entry '*gulām taindā mast*' in the Goindval Pothis.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 369-71. Significantly, Sarup Das Bhalla regards all *sants* as equal as incarnations of Bhagwan.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 375-80.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 372-74.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 363.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 892.
29. Piar Singh, *Gāthā Srī Ādi Granth*, Amritsar : Guru Nanak Dev University, 1992, pp. 22-28.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 28-30.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.
32. *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.
33. *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.
34. *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.
35. *Ibid.*, pp. 40-43.

36. Bhai Jodh Singh, *Prachīn Bīrān Bāre Bhullān dī Sodhan* in *Bhai Jodh Singh Gadd Saurabh*, ed. Piar Singh, Patiala : Punjabi University, 1986, pp. 413-86. In a later article entitled 'Srī Kartārpur wālī Pawittar Ādi Bīr', Bhai Jodh Singh advanced further 'proofs' of its authenticity : *ibid.*, pp. 487-96.
37. J.S. Grewal, *Contesting Interpretations of the Sikh Tradition*, New Delhi : Manohar, 1998, pp. 104-05.
38. Piar Singh, *Gāthā Srī Ādi Granth*, pp. 52-54.
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40. Daljeet Singh, *Essays on the Authenticity of Kartarpuri Bir and the Integrated Logic and Unity of Sikhism*, Patiala : Punjabi University, 1987.
41. Piar Singh, *Gāthā Srī Ādi Granth*, pp. 174-209. Piar Singh responded to the criticism of his *Gāthā* in his *Gāthā Srī Ādi Granth and the Controversy*, Michigan : Anant Education and Rural Development Foundation, 1996.
42. Pashaura Singh, *The Guru Granth Sahib : Canon, Meaning and Authority*, New Delhi : Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 53-59.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 123, pp. 59-68.
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 34-41.
45. *Ibid.*, pp. 61-82, 212-22, 224-34.
46. *Ibid.*, pp. 32-34, 81, 89.
47. Piar Singh, *Gāthā Srī Ādi Granth*, pp. 135-73.
48. Pashaura Singh, *The Guru Granth Sahib*, pp. 41-53, 81-82.
49. Gurinder Singh Mann, *The Making of Sikh Scripture*, New York : Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 59-68.
50. *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.
51. *Ibid.*, pp. 40-50.
52. *Ibid.*, pp. 69-85.
53. *Ibid.*, pp. 121-29.
54. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-40.
55. *Ibid.*, pp. 51-59.
56. *Ibid.*, pp. 102-20.
57. Balwant Singh Dhillon, *Early Sikh Scriptural Tradition : Myth and Reality*, Amritsar : Singh Brothers, 1999, pp. 59-60.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
59. *Ibid.*, pp. 145-47.
60. *Ibid.*, pp. 237-41.

## FORMATION OF GURU GRANTH SAHIB

*Balwant Singh Dhillon*

Formation of Guru Granth Sahib, the scripture of the Sikhs, marks a watershed in the history of spiritual heritage of Indian sub-continent. It comprises the sacred writings of Guru Nanak and his five successors, medieval Hindu Bhagats and Muslim Sufis and some Guru-oriented persons associated with the court of the Sikh Gurus. All these writings are collectively known as Gurbani or Bani which literally means speech, utterances or words that have come down to their authors in a state of spiritual union with the God. Ever since its first codification in 1604, the Sikh scripture has been looked upon as the most authentic repository of the divine 'Word'. It enjoys an unparalleled place and importance in the Sikh way of life. Moreover, it is the principle recourse (living Guru) to which the Sikhs turn for guidance to formulate their response to both the secular and religious issues concerning the community. All these factors confer upon the Sikhs the status of *ahl-i-kitab* which is very unique outside the Semitic tradition. Besides the historical and doctrinal factors leading to the origin of Sikh scripture, its preservation, transmission, compilation and canonization form the subject matter of this study.

History of the Sikh scripture can easily be traced back to the times of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism. Infact his experience of the Numinous forms the very basis of its origin. An examination of Guru Nanak's writings reveals that he intensely felt himself to be an intermediary of God to proclaim His will. While denouncing Babur's invasion he says, "as the Bani of the Master comes down to me so do I proclaim the knowledge." At another place he affirms the truthfulness of the Bani of true Guru as it is manifested in a state of spiritual union with the God. Therefore the Bani is not merely a product of poetic imagination but relates to the revelation of God. During the course of his itineraries and his stay at Kartarpur whenever Guru Nanak felt

inspired by God, he composed hymns in various ragas and metres. We are informed that during his missionary tour of West-Asia, Guru Nanak carried with him a book which is believed to be a collection of his hymns including the writings of medieval Bhagats that he had collected over the years. Sources at our disposal indicate that the Sikh liturgy that had come into vogue at Kartarpur, was based on the hymns of Guru Nanak. Before he breathed his last there existed a volume of his hymns popularly known as the *Pothi* which he bestowed on his successor, Guru Angad on his succession to Guruship. All these factors indicate that the formation of Sikh scripture and the process to institutionalize it had already started with Guru Nanak himself.

Guru Nanak's sacred writings left an indelible mark on the subsequent growth of Sikh scriptural tradition. It provided powerful stimulus to his successors to add new hymns to the received text. Though, Guru Angad's writings are not much in size, yet he underlines the character and significance of the Bani in comparison to the traditional Hindu texts. He stresses that the Bani is nectar, it reveals the essence of God. It has come through God-oriented Guru to be understood by Guru-oriented persons. Only the blessed praise it and meditate on it. Guru Angad's emphasis on the spiritual value of the Bani "laid down doctrinally the requirement of compiling the Sikh scripture."

Guru Amar Das not only preserved the sanctity of Sikh scriptural tradition but also made significant contribution by adding new hymns to it. He highlights the status of Bani maintaining that the "Bani of God-oriented is God Himself." According to him it is the light of the world. He exhorts, "O dear Sikhs come and sing the true Bani. Sing the Bani of true Guru which is the purest form of revelation." He underlines the eternal character of Sikh revelation by maintaining that it resounds in the four *yugas*. It is the genuine voice of Truth. He equates God, Guru, Bani and Sabad in such a way that investiture of Bani with Guruship seems to be imminent. On the basis of genre and style it has been concluded that the collection of Bhagat-bani which began with Guru Nanak was also available with his successors. Guru Amar Das illuminating comments upon the compositions of Baba Farid and Bhagat Kabir coupled with his appreciation of the spiritual perfection of Namdev and Kabir indicate that their writings have not only found acceptance

but had also become a part of the Sikh scriptural tradition. With the addition of third Master's writings and that of the Bhagats, the size of Sikh scriptural tradition had increased; consequently he thought it prudent to arrange the codex afresh and handed it over to his successor, Guru Ram Das.

As Guru Ram Das was closely associated with the organizational set-up of the Panth under Guru Amar Das, therefore he was in full knowledge of the Sikh scriptural tradition that had developed into the hands of his predecessors. On his part he introduced new ragas and metres to the scriptural text which marks a new stage in the development of Sikh scripture. He exhorts the Sikhs to believe in the truthfulness of the Bani of true Guru as God Himself was sitting on the tongue to manifest it. He reiterates, "as the God directs so I proclaim." He employs the word Bani in modern sense which later developed into the doctrine of Guru Granth Sahib. Evidence at hand suggests that Guru Ram Das had taken a keen interest to prepare codices in which authenticated text had been arranged. Early Sikh literature while providing glimpses into the life in *dharamsala* informs that public reading of Gurbani was an essential part of Sikh liturgy. Even the modern day practice to take *vak* i.e. to read the first hymn from the scripture when opened had come into vogue. All these factors point to the fact that the Sikh *sangats* had already installed the *Pothis* in the *dharamsalas* for their daily prayers.

In line with his predecessors Guru Arjan is credited for nurturing the Sikh scriptural tradition in more than one way. Employing various ragas and metres he composed about 2312 hymns which is the single largest contribution by any author to the sacred text of the Sikhs. Following in the footsteps of his predecessor, he reiterates that "I do not speak from my own self, I utter what had been ordained." He explains that the Bani that has come from the primordial source has extinguished all the anxieties. His words that "the Pothi is veritably the abode of God," remind that installation of Adi Granth in the Harimandir is not far away.

Unfortunately at this stage the Sikh scriptural tradition once again had come under serious threat of interpolation chiefly because of the Minas, the rivals of Guru Arjan. To purge the entry of spurious writings

into the Sikh scripture, Guru Arjan decided to codify the Sikh scripture into a volume. The process of canon formation required utmost concentration of mind. The Sikh tradition states that at this stage the compositions of some religious persons such as Kahna, Chhajju, Shah Hussain and Pilu came under consideration but Guru Arjan found them unsuitable, as he would not compromise on the basic tenets of his faith. Only those writings of the medieval Bhagats which were in consonance with the spirit of Sikhism and had been proved authentic were elevated to the status of canon to find a place in the Sikh scripture. The gigantic task of compilation and canonization carried on meticulously culminated in the form of a volume popularly known as the *Adi Granth*.

The process of transmission of any text unfolds the way in which it has been received at different stages of its history. Recently some scholars have stressed the central role of oral tradition in the formation of Sikh scripture. They feel that long before taking the scribal form Bani had been in circulation especially through musical tradition. Though, above approach has its own merit, yet there is no reason to disbelieve that Bani was not being reduced to writing. There is every likelihood that Guru Nanak being born in the Khatri family had learnt the art of reading and writing. He considers himself a *shair* whose poetic works are considered par-excellence in the history of Punjabi literature. Similarly his compositions-Asa Patti and Ramkali Dakhani Onkar, composed on the basis of Gurmukhi letters, are a living testimony to his literati. Moreover, his thought always centered on writing the glory of God. Keeping in view all these facts we can safely state that he might have been committing his religious experience to writing on its manifestation. As discussed earlier the book which he carried with him on his tour to West-Asian countries was nothing else but a collection of his compositions which he had put together over the years. The testimony of *Janamsakhi* tradition regarding the recording of Gurbani is revealing. It describes how Guru Nanak mediated the Sabad to the people around him, how the devoted Sikhs then put the Bani into writing and how the cultic ceremony was held at *dharamsala* where besides the devotional singing written hymns were subjected to public reading. We are also told that some devout Sikhs had taken upon themselves to record the Bani on its revelation. Guru Nanak's stay in Kartarpur was most eventful



for the development of Sikh scripture. Bhai Mansukh, a trader of Lahore who had come into the fold of Sikhism, stayed for three years at Kartarpur primarily to prepare Pothis of Gurbani. At Kartarpur besides explaining the significance of Japuji, Guru Nanak directed his spiritual heir (Guru) Angad to reduce it into writing and recite it, obviously to get it endorsed from him. It indicates that what Guru Nanak had composed and recorded so far was entrusted to (Guru) Angad to arrange it into a Pothi. Thus well before the demise of Guru Nanak first redaction of his sacred writings had come to be preserved in a volume. Guru Angad's real contribution in the formation of Sikh scripture lies in the fact that he standardized the Gurmukhi script and popularized its use for scribing the sacred writings of the Sikhs. From the contemporary sources we find that Bulla Pandha was one of the leading scribes at Guru Amar Das' court who had dedicated himself to scribe the Pothis of Gurbani for circulation among the Sikh *sangats*.

During the pontificate of Guru Amar Das range of the Sikh mission had widened, *manjidars* and *masands* had fanned out and *dharmaśalas* had sprung up at far-flung places. To meet the needs of worship and study, authentic codices of Bani were required. It called for renewed efforts. To encourage the Sikhs to take up scribing of Bani in a big way, Guru Ram Das remarked that labour of those Sikhs was also sanctified whose hands were engaged in writing the glory of God. It means that during his pontificate scribing of Pothis of Gurbani was developing into a pious pastime for the Sikhs. The editorial note i.e. found recorded in the old manuscripts of Guru Granth Sahib, leads us to suggest that Guru Ram Das had deeply involved himself in the scribal activities going at his court. Gayand Bhatt while glorifying the personality of Guru Ram Das refers to the practice of reading sacred hymns which had taken firm roots in the religious life of the Sikhs. Obviously, the practice of reading in congregation was not limited only to the liturgical texts but much of the compositions were read aloud for the benefit of those who were not capable of reading.

We have enough evidence to suggest that under the patronage of Guru Arjun, the hymns of Sikh Gurus were being committed to writing. Bhai Gurdas informs that there were numerous Sikhs who were copying up the compositions of the Sikh Gurus to prepare the Pothis not only for

their personal use but for others as well. According to Bhai Gurdas having accumulated the treasure of Bani (the Adi Granth), Guru Arjan was always engrossed in propagating it through *kirtan* and religious discourses. Our sources confirm that Guru Nanak and his successors were not averse to recording the Bani on its manifestation. They took a keen interest to prepare and circulate the codices of Bani among the Sikhs. Subsequently, a mother tradition of Bani in written form had flourished under the watchful eyes of the Sikh Gurus.

Another mode to transmit Bani which had developed in close proximity to the scribal tradition, related to singing or recitation of the sacred texts. As per the needs Gurus had provided to the Sikhs the Pothis of Bani, which had been duly installed in the *dharmshalas*. Besides the *kirtan* sessions, public reading or recitation of the liturgical texts also took place in the *dharmshalas*. Significantly, the style of expression underlying the Sikh scripture is a blend of music and poetry. It is most suitable for singing in public. For devotional purpose the medium of *kirtan* had struck deep roots among the Sikhs. Beginning with Guru Nanak almost all the Sikhs Gurus were gifted singers and connoisseurs of music as well. Even they had employed some professional musicians to perform *kirtan* at central Sikh shrine. Resultantly, the musical or singing tradition had developed into a powerful mode to transmit Gurbani among the Sikhs. Notwithstanding its appeal, the musical tradition has certain limitations relating to accuracy and originality as well. As the musicians had to perform *kirtan* orally, thus instead of committing to memory the whole corpus, they had memorized only the selected hymns possibly relating to liturgy and for special occasions. They were required to perform *kirtan*, only for a couple of hours in the morning and evening thus they were not in need to memorize the hymns in their totality. Considering the medieval milieu and the resources of Sikh *sangats*, the musical tradition would not have been capable to reach every nook and corner of the Sikh world. Moreover the size of Sikh sacred writings had expanded under the successive Sikh Gurus, so to keep pace with it orally was a gigantic task for the singers. It is quite possible that for sake of memory or for convenience the musicians may have noted down their favorite hymns in small note-books, similar to the collections of modern day *ragis* which sometimes they carry to perform the *kirtan*.

Subsequently, it gave rise to another scribal tradition which was minor in nature and comprised selective hymns possibly thematically arranged. It is quite possible that to dramatize the effect of singing, the musicians had brought in certain modifications relating to variation in ragas, inversion of *antras*, fillers and vocatives to suit their requirements. With the multiplicity of musical bands such variants continued to multiply. However, before they influence the Sikh sacred writings in an adverse manner, the tendency to bring in musical variants arbitrarily needs to be checked. One should keep in mind that musical tradition was only a means to popularize the message of Bani but not an end to preserve it for posterity. The genesis of Sikh scripture was not the outcome of aesthetic considerations especially music and poetry. Though, a number of authors have contributed to it and a wide variety of ragas and metres have been employed, yet the whole literature is essentially religious in nature. It relates to the spiritual realm which sets it apart from an ordinary piece of music and literature.

Looking back at the pre-Adi Granth milieu there is no reason to doubt that to compete with the main stream Sikhism, at least three other traditions of Gurbani namely the Udasis, the Bhallas, and the Minas had come to stay among the Sikhs. Even, the Hindalias, a heretical sect had emerged on the scene to pollute the Sikh tradition. The Sikh Gurus were impelled to defend the originality and authenticity of their mission vis-à-vis what their rivals claimed to be. It is a fact that the rivals were also producing their own codices ostensibly to establish and run their own gurudoms. We can well-imagine that *Pothis* of Bani were being produced by different scribes for different reasons and purposes. The role of the *Janamsakhis* and that of the scribes engaged in copying the text was quite significant in the transmission of Bani.

There is no doubt that some manuscripts of the Adi Granth carry certain textual variants which have been the focus of attention of scholars working on the Sikh scripture. Working largely on the basis of common features of the manuscripts the critics have grouped the extant manuscripts into four major recensions—the Kartarpur, the Lahore, the Banno and the Damdama. For reconstructing the history of the text one is expected to go through a maze of sources especially belonging to pre-Adi Granth era. Sikh tradition informs that Guru Arjan while

compiling the Adi Granth had some other sources at his disposal besides the volume inherited from his father, Guru Ram Das. Unfortunately neither the earlier sources nor the original writings of the early Sikh Gurus have survived. Some scholars presume that behind the maze of manuscripts there existed an exemplar or prototype of the Adi Granth. They feel that by reconstructing the genealogy of the sources one can identify the archetype or original text of the Sikh scripture. Consequently, they have identified three sources-the Guru Har Sahai Pothi, the Goindwal Pothis and MS#1245 which they think have descended one after another and have played a major role in the formation of Sikh scripture. Though, these sources have been extensively used to reconstruct three phases of the evolution of Sikh scripture, yet they have not been subjected to rigorous examination to test their antecedents. The variety of textual variants present in these sources proves that neither of them is a direct copy of each other nor they have descended one after another. Internal evidence confirms that they are in no way ancestral to the Adi Granth. These documents represent three different text families which were predominantly musical as well as sectarian in nature.

On the other hand to highlight the efforts and labour put into by Guru Arjan to compile the Sikh scripture, traditional Sikh scholars describe that he had to procure Bani from different sources, especially from the Sikh *sangats* and devout Sikhs settled in different regions of the Sikh world. They assume that full text of Gurbani was not available and it lay scattered in different sources at far-flung places. This approach is not much convincing. Firstly, there is no reason to disbelieve that being the spiritual heir of Guru Nanak's mission Guru Arjan had not inherited the whole mass of scriptural writings associated with his predecessors. Secondly, the range of Sikh mission had expanded, yet the most intense concentration of the Sikhs was in the Upper Bari Doab region of the Punjab. Almost all the immediate successors of Guru Nanak had remained busy in the confines of this region. Thirdly, all the major Sikh centres that had come up so far were situated in and around the above region. In the face of above factors to conceive that Guru Arjan was unfamiliar with the scriptural writings of his predecessors and to procure them he had to depend on the Sikhs settled at far away places, does not look plausible. However, to procure the writings of medieval Bhagats

he might have approached their devotees settled in and outside Punjab and may have got the sources available with them. Sikh tradition confirms that some of the medieval Bhagats and Sufis had approached Guru Arjan with a request to include their writings in the Sikh scripture. The titles such as that occurs in the Adi Granth, suggest that some writings of the Bhagats have come into the Sikh scripture from the sources that were available to the fifth Master.

It is widely believed that the Pothis of Bani which were current in the Sikh community during the pre-Adi Granth period had no canonical authority. The term 'canon' (Greek : *kanon*, measuring rod) while applied to the scriptural sources sets the normative pattern to decide the status of a document. Critics also hold that canonization of the Sikh text occurred at a specific point of history and it is attributed to the fifth Master alone. The internal evidence of Sikh scripture points to a canonization process, which is marked by three pivotal stages. Firstly, it occurred during the pontificate of Guru Amar Das when the 'spurious' writings of a 'pseudo-guru', which were likely to affect the originality of Gurbani, were not allowed to enter into the Sikh scriptural tradition. We observe that Guru Amar Das after applying the criterion of *sachi* versus *kachi-bani* had prepared the codex afresh. During the second stage Guru Ram Das very zealously guarded the originality of Sikh sacred writings and did not allow the *kachi-bani*, composed in the vein of Sikh Gurus to interpolate the Sikh scriptural sources. The codices that he had prepared for subsequent circulation among the Sikh *sangats* for worship and study held the authentic writings of the Sikh Gurus. The third stage related to the internal crisis created by the Minas when the Sikh scriptural tradition had come under serious threat of interpolation. It resulted in the codification of the Sikh scripture, the Adi Granth by which Guru Arjan Dev rejected once for all the unauthentic writings which had come to be attributed to the Sikh Gurus and the Bhagats as well. Thus, the canonization of Sikh scriptural tradition was the result of a half century long process whereby only those writings that had been proved authentic were elevated to the status of Sachi-Bani to play a decisive role in the formation of Sikh Scripture. Hence, the canonization of the Sikh scriptural tradition should not be viewed as a later development related to Guru Arjan Dev only but it was an ongoing process.

coextensive with the pontificate of his predecessors as well.

With the codification of Adi Granth in 1604 the Sikh canon had been closed. It looks quite plausible that it would have resulted in complete replacement of all other versions leaving no room for any addition or deletion. But it could not be realized due to certain reasons. With the movement of Sikh Gurus to the Shivalik foothills, the Minas had got ascendancy in central Punjab. They had taken control of Harimandir in Amritsar to propagate their variety of scripture in which writings penned by them in the name of 'Nanak' were also in circulation. Similarly, due to the arbitrariness of the scribes and musicians some textual versions of canflated and corrupt nature had also appeared. The Bani composed by Guru Tegh Bahadur had also found its entry into the Sikh text though in a haphazard manner. Perhaps all these factors weighed heavily on Guru Gobind Singh to finally canonize the Sikh scripture. According to the Sikh tradition in 1706 at Damdama, Talwandi Sabo for the first time he incorporated the writings of Guru Tegh Bahadur into the Sikh scripture and it is the Damdama version which was invested with Guruship by him upon his death in 1708.

Our sources reveal that history of the literary activities in the Sikh Panth is not of recent origin but is quite old. We observe that during the pre-Adi Granth period, hymns of the Sikh Gurus had been reduced to writing, the pothis of Gurbani had been installed in the *dharamsalas* and their reading in public had become the core of Sikh liturgy. But it is quite astonishing to note that no writing or codex belonging to the earlier Gurus has survived. If they ever existed then why none of them is traceable now? What are the reasons for their disappearance? Whether all these sources had been destroyed callously to promulgate the official scripture? All these issues are of serious concern for a text critic. Unlike the orthodox Caliphs of Islam, a decree on the part of the Sikh Gurus to destroy all the scriptural sources except the Adi Granth, is still unheard of in the annals of Sikh history. It seems with the codification of the Adi Granth, all other codices of Gurbani, had been rendered redundant and lost religious significance for the Sikhs to preserve them for posterity. Another reason, which is equally significant, is that during the period of persecution, the Sikhs were hard pressed to preserve their literature. What happened to the Sikhs and their scripture during the ascendancy

of Lakhpat Rai, Diwan of Lahore (1740s), is worth reminding in the words of Rattan Singh Bhangoo :

It was announced with the beat of drum that no one should utter the name of Guru. Anyone found uttering the name of Guru would be arrested and his belly ripped open. It was also decreed that no one should read the Bani of Guru Nanak. To avoid persecution at the hands of Mughal authorities the Sikhs had to stack away their Granth and Pothis as well.

In the light of above scenario, the critics who rue for the disappearance of the sources of the Adi Granth, can well-imagine that where and with whom the Pothis of Gurbani could have survived.

Contrary to the Sikh tradition some scholars do not feel that there has been any effort on the part of Guru Gobind Singh to finalize the Sikh canon in 1706 at Damdama. According to them even concern for correct and authentic text within the Sikh Panth is a later phenomenon which was a direct outcome of granting of guruship to the Granth Sahib in 1708 by the tenth Master. These observations are highly irrational. We are informed that Sikh Gurus have enjoined upon the Sikhs to recite the Bani correctly. The notes such as found recorded in the old manuscripts of the Adi Granth bear an ample proof that there was no let up on the issue of textual accuracy. A manuscript of the Adi Granth dating back to 1659 now preserved at Dehradun notes that Mira Bai's song is absent in the fifth Guru's Granth. Similarly, another note in it informs that these *salokas* have been copied from the Granth of fifth Master. Significantly, another manuscript of the Adi Granth completed in 1692 now in the collection of Takht Patna Sahib, has a note that "this Granth is a copy of Fateh Chand's Granth which in turn is a copy of the Puhkar Granth. The Puhkar Granth has been corrected against the big Granth which the fifth Guru got recorded by Bhai Gurdas. A Granth corrected against that one becomes correct." All these facts confirm that interest for authentic and authoritative text that has descended from Guru Arjan Dev, was always high in the minds of 17th century Sikhs.

Guru Nanak and his successors were fully aware of the role and status of existing scriptures. Guru Nanak's claim that the present social order is degenerate and needs a new dispensation was the very basis for the genesis of Sikh scripture. The Sikh scripture derives its authority from its self-illuminating and self-evident eternal Truth. Instead of

depending upon earlier scriptures Guru Nanak and his successors had provided to the Sikhs the medium of Bani as an instrument of divine communication with God. The institution of Sikh scripture that emerged eventually was based directly on the Sikh doctrines of God, Guru, and Bani. Thus formation of the Sikh scripture was in direct response to the needs of the emerging Panth. It was a gradual process that had reached its culmination in 1708. Circulation of incorrect scriptural texts, misuse and misappropriation of the True revelation and the concern to protect the True faith from divisive forces were largely responsible for the formation of Guru Granth Sahib. When the Sikh scripture came to be compiled in the form of a volume and installed in the Harmandir, it became a holy object to be treated with veneration. Subsequently it was bestowed Guruship by the tenth Guru to accord it the divine status and honour which it enjoys to the present days. Though it has many a cosmopolitan features, yet it enjoys independent, ardent and living relationship with the Sikhs.



## SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB : A DISTINCTIVE HOLY BOOK

*Jaswant Singh Neki*

Granth literally means strung or bound, hence, a book. Granth Sahib means 'a venerable book' or 'a holy book'. The term Guru means that which removes darkness or, in other words, 'brings enlightenment'. Sri is another term of veneration. Sri Guru Granth Sahib, then, means the most venerable holy book that brings enlightenment. It is, indeed, an unusual holy book in many ways.

The distinctiveness of this holy book is multifarious, and we shall try to understand it by going over various distinctions one by one. These fall under the following heads :

(a) Originally preserved (b) first things first (c) the only pluralist scripture (d) The revealed Word as Guru (e) Discourse of the downtrodden (f) Novel ways of purification (g) Dignity of labour.

The sacred texts as a generic entity fall into two types : 'those where reciting or reading aloud is primary' : and those where the written form is. The Vedas were orally and aurally (*shruti*) transmitted for millennia. The Zarathustrian 'scripture' Zend Avesta was oral for centuries. The Qur'an, that literally means 'recitation', also seems primarily to belong to the oral tradition. Yet, the Muslims consider themselves *ahal-I-kitab* 'the people of the book'. The Jewish term *miqra* used for their scriptures is from the same root as *qur'an*, hence, here also the same dual ascription applies. In Christianity, the Protestant Reformation, in ejecting the idolatry of the mediaeval Church's images, made a shift from the visual to the aural making a new emphasis on the Bible. The 1611 King James Authorised Version of the English Bible certified on its title page that it was "Appointed to be Read in Churches."<sup>1</sup> Thus, there are two, though somewhat overlapping, traditions of 'scriptures'—ones where reciting or reading out loud, is primary, and the others where the written form is<sup>2</sup>. Guru Granth Sahib, from its first

recension compiled by Guru Arjan Dev had a written form. It was then called *pothi Sahib*, meaning, 'a revered book'. Not only could it be read quietly, or even recited aloud (as *paath*), but could even be sung, for it was not only in verse, each one of its verses also carried with it a classic musical notation with which to sing it. The exact musical form harmonizes with the spirit of the text and the two together weave a captivating spiritual texture. This sets it a holy book clearly different from others in its formal aspect.

### First things first

Sri Guru Granth Sahib stands absolutely distinct from all other holy books in that it gives primacy to the most fundamental thing. Edmond Bittencourt has observed, "Nanak placed first things first. The Bible does not begin with One God. It begins with many gods. The Hebrew word Allahim or Elohim is the plural of the Semitic Allah or God."<sup>3</sup> Sri Guru Granth Sahib opens with the numeral 'one' written as 'ੴ' in the Gurmukhi numerology. This numeral stands for un-compromised monotheism. It indicates God's perfect oneness. It signifies that God is the absolute and ultimate Oneness of the entire multiplicity as one infinite reality. The unity of God expressed by it has been reaffirmed time and time again in Gurbani. For example :

My Lord is only one !

The one Only, O brother, the only One !<sup>4</sup>

It also signifies His uniqueness. He is *aduti* (without a second).

The Guru affirms :

This characteristic is His alone

That there is none other like Him,

There never was, there never shall be.<sup>5</sup>

In the numeral One is also reflected His simplicity. His absolute simplicity means that He is not composed of any distinct elements such as essence and existence, matter and form, potentiality and actuality.

He has no form, no shape, no colour,

From the three *gunas* (qualities) He is beyond.<sup>6</sup>

His simplicity is inter-related with His perfection. Divine simplicity spells Divine perfection, and omnipotence.

He is the potent cause of all causes, O brother,

Brimming with all powers.<sup>7</sup>

The numeral One also spells His eternity. He is *anadi* (without beginning) and *ananta* (without end), nor is any succession present in Him.

At all places and in all times, He appears to be the same.<sup>8</sup> Succession signifies Time. But He is beyond Time i.e. Akal. He is also infinite. God's infinity is not a seemingly endless space always outpouring our thought, it is infinite in all perfection. His infinity is absolutely mysterious, utterly ineffable.

Infinite is the Lord,  
I describe Him with all my might—  
But little do I know what He is like.<sup>9</sup>

The numeral One also indicates His ubiquity as also His immutability. His ubiquity is His omnipresence.

In the realm of land, and the realm of waters,  
The chamber of four directions is your abode.  
Yours is the sole form in the universe entire,  
Your countenance is the mint that fashions all.<sup>10</sup>

His immutability is affirmed in the following lines of Guru Gobind Singh:

The One light pervades all space and time,  
It neither decreases, nor increases,  
Nor is subject to change.<sup>11</sup>

He is the One universal God.

Says Nanak, the Guru has removed my doubt.

Allah (of the Muslims) and Parbrahm (of the Hindus) are one and the same.<sup>12</sup>

The numeral One marks the beginning of a stanza, consisting of fourteen word-globules, and called the Mool Mantra—the Prime Revelation—that provides the best known description of God. A question is sometimes asked us to why the first expression is in terms of a numeral and not in terms of a word—the word 'ik' or one. It appears that by using the numeral the expression 'One' has been, as if, put outside of parentheses within which are to be considered the remaining thirteen word-globules. In other words, One gets attached with everyone of them. Hence God is

|                  |                               |
|------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>Ik Oankar</i> | The One Transcendent-immanent |
| <i>Ik Sat</i>    | The One True Existent         |

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| <i>Ik Nam</i>     | The One Essence                                   |
| <i>Ik Karta</i>   | The One Creator                                   |
| <i>Ik Purakh</i>  | The One Pervasive Being                           |
| <i>Ik Nirbhau</i> | The One Without Fear—in other words, Omnipotent   |
| <i>Ik Nirvair</i> | The One Without rancour—in other words, Pure Love |
| <i>Ik Akal</i>    | The One Beyond Time                               |
| <i>Ik Moorati</i> | The One Manifest                                  |
| <i>Ik Ajooni</i>  | The One Un-incarnate                              |
| <i>Ik Saibhan</i> | The One Self-luminous                             |
| <i>Ik Gur</i>     | The One Enlightener                               |
| <i>Ik Prasadi</i> | The One Gracious Being                            |

From Ik Oankar to Gur Prasadi, this Mool Mantra is a cryptic but profound statement about the nature of the Almighty. This Mantra is unmatched in every sense. In the entire religious literature of the world, there is nothing comparable with it. This, then is the most outstanding distinction of Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

### **The Revealed Word**

The content of this great scripture consists of Revealed Word, which is not just a human composition. The Guru himself announces that

This Bani<sup>13</sup> came from on High,  
And removed all care.<sup>14</sup>

The Guru does not believe that he himself has contributed anything to it. Whatever he has said is as per the Divine Will.

I have no ability to say anything myself,  
Whatever I have said is as per Divine Will.<sup>15</sup>

### **Preservation of the Bani in original**

Since the Gurus themselves consider the Bani as the Divine Word, it is understandable that they spared no effort to preserve it themselves. One of the major distinctions of Sri Guru Granth Sahib from other holy books is that the Gurus themselves preserved it. Hence, its authenticity is patent and beyond any question.

There is sufficient evidence to substantiate this fact. One specific *bani* of Guru Nanak Dev, Patti Likhi occurs in the beginning of Rag

Aasa in Sri Guru Granth Sahib. The word Likhi makes it amply clear that this text was preserved in writing by the Guru himself. There is evidence also that some Sikh companions of the Guru also played a role in the preservation of the Guru's works. According to *Puratan Janam Sakhi*, during the Guru's Northern odyssey, two of his disciples, Hasu and Seeha accompanied him and they preserved the Guru's work Malar di Var.<sup>16</sup> At least a part of the Majh di Var as well as the Sidh Goshti were preserved by Saido Jat.<sup>17</sup> The Guru's composition delivered in the concentration camp of Saidpur was preserved by Jharu Kalal.<sup>18</sup> A Sikh, Mansukh by name, stayed with the Guru for three years and preserved a great deal of the Guru's works.<sup>19</sup> According to Bhai Gurdas, when the Guru went to Mecca, he was carrying a book containing his works in his armpit.<sup>20</sup>

In the final Sakhi of the same source, at the time of the coronation of Guru Angad as his successor, Guru Nanak also handed over to him the 'works of his own tongue'<sup>21</sup>. Guru Angad seems to have passed on this book along with his own 63 slokas to Guru Amar Das, who deputed the work of recompiling these works to his grandson, Sahansar Ram. The two volumes of that compilation are available as the *pothis* of Patiala and of Ahyapur.<sup>22</sup> In the margin of page 94 of the Patiala *pothi*, is inscribed the signature of Guru Ram Das as 'Gulam Mastan Jeth Chand'.<sup>23</sup> During the time of Guru Arjan Dev, such crafty contenders as Prithia and Meharban started composing apocryphal imitations of Gurbani even fraudulently employing, like the Gurus, the eponym Nanak to camouflage it, and make it acceptable as genuine Gurbani. In order to clear the confusion caused by such apocrypha, Guru Arjan Dev undertook a well-conceived plan to edit and compile the available bani including his own in such a way as to prevent even the slightest intrusion of external material into Gurbani. He planned the following steps. First, no space was to be left between the words. Second, every stanza of a verse, as also every verse, and then all the verses in a section of the text were to be individually as well as collectively numbered. Even with regard to Bhagat Bani, the Gurus seems to have collected it from the original sources, or at least authentic secondary sources.<sup>24</sup>

Several scholars<sup>25</sup> under the overall guidance and supervision of Bai Gurdas were put to this work. The entire Bani was accommodated

under relevant ragas. The recension thus prepared was named Pothi Sahib. Bhai Banno prepared a hurried copy thereof, while the original was being taken for binding. Certain shortcomings and errors crept into it during copying. So, it was called khari beed or 'the Brackish Version'. It was during Guru Har Rai's pontificate, that Pathi Sahib began to be called Granth Sahib.

Unfortunately, the original recension of the Granth Sahib fell into the hands of those who were slanderers of the 'house of the Guru'. So Guru Gobind Singh, who had committed to his heart the entire content of Sri Guru Granth Sahib reproduced it in the form of a new recension. He also incorporated into it the works of Guru Tegh Bahadur.

The above discussion brings home the fact that Sri Guru Granth Sahib preserves its contents in their original, authentic form. This makes this holy book stand out in contradistinction to other scriptures. Lord Krishna's message, as epitomized in the Bhagavad Gita was not jotted down by him ever. It was introduced into *Mahabharat* by a Rishi long time after Lord Krishna. The Bible also is not the work of Jesus Christ, but of some of his disciples years after his demise. Likewise, the Qur'an was compiled long after the demise of Prophet Muhammad. Only Guru Granth Sahib has the distinction of having been preserved by the Gurus themselves.

In the words of M.A. Macauliffe, "Many of the great teachers the world has known, have not left a line of their composition and we only know what they taught through tradition or second hand information... But the compositions of the Sikh Gurus are preserved and we know at first hand what they taught."

### **The Granth as the Guru**

It goes without saying that Sri Guru Granth Sahib is the principle holy scripture of the Sikhs. The Sikhs consider it as their perennial Guru or enlightener. In the Sikh parlance, the word Guru is chiefly employed in the Sikh parlance for the ten spiritual prophets—Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh—and for none other. However, Guru Gobind Singh, the last Guru, before he passed away in 1708 AD, apotheosized the sacred book and commanded the Sikhs to seek guidance from it in future. Thereafter, no living person, spiritually had morally however exalted, could have the status or title of 'Guru'. Some sects, that hold the belief

that a personal living Guru is necessary, doubted for long the veracity of the story of enthronement of the holy book as the 'Eternal Guru' of the Sikhs. However, documentary evidence from several sources, contemporary or almost contemporary of the Guru, has left no doubt whatsoever about it. Outstanding evidence comes from the *Bhatt Vahi Bhadson Thanesar* by Bhatt Narbud Singh<sup>26</sup>, who was with Guru Gobind Singh at Nanded at that time. It may not be fruitlessly expansive to quote from him.

*Guru Gobind Singh mahal dasman beta Guru Tegh Bahadur ka pota Guru Hargobind ji ka parpota Guru Arjan ji ka Bans Guru Ramdas ji ki Surajbansi Gosal gotra Sodhi Khatri basi Anandpur parganah Kahlur muqam Nanded tat Godavari des dakkhan sammat satran sai painsath Kartik mas ki chauth shukal pakkhe budhwar ke dihun Bhai Daya Singh se bachan hoya Sri Granth Sahib lai ao bachan pae Daya Singh Sri Granth Sahib lai aye Guru ji ne panch paise narial age bheta rakha age matha teka sabat sangat se kaha mera hukam hai meri jagah Sri Granth ji ko janana jo Sikh janega tis ki ghal thaen paegi Guru tis ki bahuri karega sat kar manana.*

Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Master, son of Guru Tegh Bahadur, grandson of Guru Hargobind, great-grandson of Guru Arjun, of the lineage of Guru Ramdas, Surajbansi Gosal clan, Sodhi Khatri, resident of Anandpur parganah Kahlur, currently living in Nanded, on the bank of Godavari, in the Deccan, asked Bhai Daya Singh, on Wednesday, shukla pakkh chauth of the month of Kartik<sup>27</sup> to fetch Sri Granth Sahib. Bhai Daya Singh complied with the order and brought Sri Granth Sahib. The Guru placed before it five paise and a coconut fruit, and bowed his head to it. He said to the congregation (*sangat*), "It is my command : own Sri Granth Sahib in my place, Whoever so acknowledges, his faith and effort shall be rewarded. The Guru will come to his rescue, Know this as the truth."

Another contemporary evidence comes forth from Bhai Nand Lal, who was then at Nanded in the camp of Bahadur Shah Zafar as one of his ministers at the time of the Guru's demise. In his *Rahitnama*<sup>28</sup>, he thus records his last words in his Punjabi verse :

He who would wish to see the Guru,  
Let him come and see the Granth.

... ..

One who wishes to speak with him,  
Let him read the Granth and reflect upon its message.

Bhai Prehlahd Singh, another of the Guru's associates, in his *Rahet Nama* attributes the following utterance to Guru Gobind Singh :

Ordained by the Timeless, the Panth I started.

I command the Sikhs to regard the Granth as their Guru.

They were further commanded :

Whoever wishes to meet God, should delve into its text.

That Guru Gobind Singh formally installed the holy book as his successor is an indisputable fact. This is supported explicitly by evidence bequeathed through documentary as well as oral tradition and has come down the generations through Sikh memory. In its exilic times, when the Sikh community had been outlawed, and they were seeking refuge in the safety of hills, forests and deserts; they defended the sanctity of the holy book even at the cost of their lives. It has been, and continues to be the principal doctrinal reference for the Sikhs and the only focus of their religious attachment.

Apart from historical reasons, there are also doctrinal reasons why this holy book is revered as the 'Eternal Living Guru'. A question is often asked, 'who was the Guru of Guru Nanak?' The Guru himself provides us the answer in his verse in *Raga Sorath* :

Nanak found his Guru in the Infinite, Transcendent, Supreme, Lord God.

— Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 599

And, the Word enshrined in the holy book is divine Word revealed to mankind through the Guru. In fact, Guru Nanak himself indicated eternal Guru status of the Word. When the Siddhas asked him :

'Who is your Guru, to whom are you a disciple?'

The Guru replied :

Word alone is the Guru and raptly attentive consciousness is the disciple.

— Sri Guru Granth Sahib. p. 943

The Sikh Gurus were thus revealers of the Word and one day the Word was to take the place of the Guru for the line of personal Gurus could not have continued indefinitely forever. Only through the Word could the Guruship be made everlasting. Thus this book preserves the Divine Word in deep freeze for all mankind.

I said, "For all mankind." That is because Guru Granth Sahib is not for the Sikhs alone. Nor are the Sikh Gurus its exclusive authors. In fact, it enshrines the works of only six Gurus and not all the ten. But,



besides them it has encased works of very many Hindu and Muslim saints of the middle ages. From Sheikh Farid (born 1173) to Guru Tegh Bahadur (expired 1675), its galaxy of authors covers full five centuries of India's spiritual throbbing.

## I. The GURUS

| <i>Name</i>       | <i>Lifetime</i> | <i>No. of Hymns</i> | <i>Comments</i>  |
|-------------------|-----------------|---------------------|--|
| Guru Nanak Dev    | 1469-1539       | 974                 | First Guru.<br>Founder of Sikh Faith                           |
| Guru Angad Dev    | 1504-1552       | 62                  | Second Guru.<br>Adopted Gurmukhi Script                        |
| Guru Amar Das     | 1479-1574       | 907                 | Third Guru.<br>Made langar compulsory                          |
| Guru Ram Das      | 1534-1581       | 679                 | Fourth Guru.<br>Founded Amritsar.                              |
| Guru Arjan Dev    | 1563-1606       | 2218                | Fifth Guru.<br>Compiled Sri Adi Granth                         |
| Guru Tegh Bahadur | 1621-1675       | 115                 | Ninth Guru.<br>Sacrificed himself for the<br>freedom of faith. |

## II. The SAINTS

| <i>Name</i>                | <i>Lifetime</i> | <i>Religion</i> | <i>Domicile</i> | <i>No. of Hymns</i> |
|----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Sheikh Farid<br>Sufi Fakir | 1173-1265       | Muslim          | Punjab          | 134                 |
| Jai Dev<br>Brahmin         | 12th century    | Hindu           | Bengal          | 2                   |
| Trilochan<br>Vaishya       | 1267-1335       | Hindu           | Maharashtra     | 4                   |
| Namdev<br>Calico-printer   | 1269-1344       | Hindu           | Maharashtra     | 60                  |
| Sadhna<br>Butcher          | 13th century    | Muslim          | Sindh           | 1                   |
| Beni                       | 14th century    | Hindu           | Bihar           | 3                   |
| Ramanand<br>Brahmin        | 1340-1430       | Hindu           | U.P.            | 1                   |

|                                       |              |  |             |     |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|--|-------------|-----|
| Kabir<br>Weaver                       | 1380-1460    | Muslim                                   | U.P.        | 541 |
| Sain<br>Barber                        | 1390-1440    | Hindu                                    | M.P.        | 1   |
| Ravidas<br>Cobbler                    | 1399-1514    | Hindu                                    | U.P.        | 41  |
| Parmanand                             | 15th century | Hindu                                    | Maharashtra | 1   |
| Dhanna<br>Farmer                      | 1415-1513    | Hindu                                    | Rajasthan   | 4   |
| Pipa<br>Prince                        | 1408-1468    | Hindu                                    | Rajasthan   | 1   |
| Mardana<br>Companion of<br>Guru Nanak | 1460-1530    | Muslim                                   | Punjab      | 3   |
| Bhikhan<br>Sufi Fakir                 | 1480-1573    | Muslim                                   | U.P.        | 2   |
| Satta & Balvand<br>Bards              | 16th century | Muslim                                   | Punjab      | 8   |
| Sunder                                | 1560-1610    | Great-<br>grandson<br>of Guru<br>Amardas | Punjab      | 1   |
| Surdas<br>Brahmin                     | 1528-1585    | Hindu                                    | Haryana     | 2   |

In addition to the above, 11 bard-poets of Guru Arjan Dev's court contributed a number of hymns—Kalashaar, 54; Nalh, 16; Mathura; 14; Gyand, 13; Keerat, 8; Jalap and Bal, 5 each; Salh, 3; Bhikhaa and Harbans, 2 each; and Bhal, 1.

From all the scriptures in the world, this scripture from the Punjab, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, stands apart because it is a pluralist holy book, in that it accommodates both the Aryan and the Semitic spiritual traditions. That is, perhaps, why, Arnold Toynbee, the great historian, calls it "mankind's common spiritual treasure."

### **The two trilogies of spiritual action**

There are two very popular maxims that together sum up the elements of Sikh spiritual praxis. These are Naam, Daan, Ishnaan and Sri Satguru Jagjit Singh Ji eLibrary NamdhariElibrary@gmail.com

Kirt-karni, Naam-japna, and Vand-chhakna. Of the two, the former is the purgatory trilogy, and the later is the trilogy of God-centered action. In these two, Naam is the common element. So, altogether five essential elements of spiritual praxis seem to be established in the Sikh tradition on the basis of the teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

### Naam

The praxis of Naam is both purgatory and the means of spiritual advancement. It is usually translated as 'Name' and is supposed to signify God's Name.

It is, of course, that, but in the Sikh parlance, it signifies a great deal more. Guru Nanak Dev, we have already noted, has said :

Himself He created Himself, and Himself He assumed His Naam  
In the second place, He created Nature

—Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 463.

Here Naam appears to signify God's creative impulse that arose from within Him and led to creation of the whole universe. Theologically, this is an important nuance of Naam. There is yet another important significance of this term.

Everything in this world has a form (*roop*) and a name (*naam*). However, even though God has no form perceptible to our senses, He has a name, because He is the prime existent. Naam, therefore also signifies His existence. Naam japna signifies, remembering Him, His attributes and His virtues. By practicing Naam Japna, one begins to absorb into oneself His qualities and virtues. Guru Amardas assures us that :

By praising His virtues, one merges into the Virtuous.

—Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1057

In spiritual effort Naam japna has been regarded as one of the simplest, yet one of the most powerful techniques for acquiring spiritual insight. Essentially, it amounts to practicing the presence of God. In the words of Kabir, it is

Keeping the mind ever focused on Him  
While sitting or standing or lying down.

It is also a meditative technique that leads to stilling of a turbulent mind and thereby bestows peace and tranquility on the practitioner.

Yet, God does not have just one Name. Guru Gobind Singh says :

Whoever can pronounce your Comprehensive Name?  
 I can only recount Your Attributive Names—  
 For that also I seek wisdom from You.

— Dasam Granth Sahib, Jaap Sahib, p. 611

The practice of Naam is above all other meritorious practices.

The Guru says :

Meritorious deeds, giving in charity, meditation, and penance are  
 all right,  
 But above them all is the Naam.

—Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 401

Apart from meditation on the Naam, other spiritual practices that have been prescribed to help the seeker in his effort are *ardaas* (prayer), *kirtan* (singing the Lord's praises), and *paath* (reciting the scriptures). Each one of these has great significance not only in facilitating naam simrin but also as independent and sovereign practices for the realization of the Lord.

## Daan

Daan means giving in charity. It is a divine attribute. Guru Ramdas says :

I see no one as great a Giver as You  
 You give in charity to all the beings in all the continents, worlds and  
 universes.

—Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 549

What is it that we have not received from the Almighty, without asking, without seeking? To give in charity to needy beings is but a token appreciation of the Lord for what we have received. Guru Nanak Dev, who eulogizes the householder, also expects that

He shall be charity incarnate.

—Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 952

However, *daan* must be given in humility. Any pride or arrogance about it renders it futile. Guru Tegh Bahadur instructs us that

Making holy pilgrimages, observing fasts, and giving in charity,  
 And feeling proud about them,  
 Renders these actions useless, like the elephant, who takes a bath,  
 and  
 Then rolls in dust.

—Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1428

## Ishnaan

Ishnaan literally means ‘a bath’, or ‘physical ablution’. It is a symbol of cleanliness. In Sikhism, cleanliness is literally next to godliness. While Naam purifies the soul and *daan* purifies one’s earnings, *ishnaan* purifies one’s body. Not just that, *ishnaan* is also an essential preparation for meditation on *Naam*. This meditation is best undertaken during the silent third quarter of the night. Waking up that early, one would surely need a bath in order to dispel sloth and sleepiness. That is why, we are advised :

Take your bath and meditate on God—

Ensure thereby healthy body and healthy mind.

—Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 611

## Kirt Karni

Kirt karni is an aphoristic expression that means earning one’s living through labour with one’s own hands. Saint Namdev was a calico-printer. Another saint, Tilochan visited him and questioned him, ‘The whole day you keep on printing textile, when do you find time to meditate? Namdev answered,

“O Tilochan, listen,

With your hands and feet you do your work,

But let your mind remain with the Lord.

—Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1375

A Sikh is expected to live a life full of effort, even earn the pleasures of life, but he must never forget the Lord.

Live a life of effort, earn you living and pleasures enjoy,

Contemplating the Lord you meet Him and have your anxieties dispelled.

—Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 522

The dictum is : ‘Your hands to your work, your mind with the Lord’.

The Gurus established dignity of labour. In the traditional Hindu system, those who served were considered inferior, and those to whom service was rendered were reckoned superior. The Gurus sought to reverse this. They exalted those who served and disapproved those who shunned serving others.

Those who served the Lord, attained peace,

Those who didn’t are bound to regret

—Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1071

Hence, the Guru encourages the Sikh to  
 Serve while in the world, and  
 Get a place of honour in the Court of the Lord.

—Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 26

### **Vand chhakna**

A Sikh is given the following advice by the Guru :  
 One who works for what he eats  
 And gives others some of what he has,  
 Says Nanak, he knows the path.

—Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1245

Sharing with others some of whatever one has spare is a sacred duty of everyone. This is first of all an acknowledgement of the gifts that one has received from God. It is also an affirmation of the fellow feeling one has for other human beings.

Sharing with the others has also been institutionalized in the form of the Guru's free kitchen (*langar*) run by the Sikh community as a function of the Gurudwaras where thousands are fed every day without let or hinderence and without any discrimination of colour, creed, class, caste etc.

### **CONCLUSION**

It must have become apparent from the above account that Sri Guru Granth Sahib is no ordinary scripture. Wilfred Cantwell Smith with regret observes that, "For some of us Guru Granth Sahib is not scripture." He goes on to explain the reason and says, "Those of us who are Jews, Christians, and Muslims have constituted historically the most narrow and most intolerant of the world's religious communities." In fact, anyone with an exclusivist cosmic vision will have difficulty in recognizing this pluralist holy book as scripture. However, one may legitimately ask, 'Should that be considered its strength or its weakness?'

Sri Guru Granth Sahib differs from Judeo Christian scriptures in that it is not a historical document. No doubt, it has a history; no doubt also that there are allusions to some historical events in it; yet, its message is soaked with eternity rather than with temporality. That is what makes it the Eternal Guru.

There, undoubtedly, is one more historical aspect of this holy book—that is, it historically has served many, and many still continues

to serve spiritually. Through it they have found peace, liberation, transcendence and answers to man's ultimate concerns. Those who have faithfully delved into it have derived an amazing sense of living—in awe, wonder, mystery and grace.

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— Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 763.
16. Sakhi 47
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21. ਸੋ ਪੋਥੀ ਜੁਬਾਨਿ ਗੁਰੁ ਅੰਗਦ ਜੋਗ ਮਿਲੀ । ਸਾਖੀ ਅੰਤਲੀ
22. The pothi of Ahyapur has been edited by Pritam Singh. It is a commendable work of real scholarship.
23. 'Jeth Chand' was Guru Ram Das's name before he became the Guru. His signature indicate that he had perused that *pothi* even during the pontificate of Guru Amar Das.
24. As an example, let us take Kabir's works. There is so much extent under

the name of Kabir today that much of its content is sheer apocryphal. However, knowledgeable scholars all agree that whatever has been included in Sri Guru Granth Sahib under his name is absolutely authentic.

25. Among those scholars are reported to be the following : Bhais Sant Das, Haria Ram, Sukha and Mansa Ram.
26. *Bhatt Vahis*, an indisputable source of information about many events of Sikh History, were discovered by Giani Garja Singh (1904-77) a keen searcher of historical materials. The Bhatts were hereditary panegyrists, or family bards of whom several families came into the Sikh fold. They recorded events of the lives of the Gurus and their families in their scrolls called *Vahis*. The descendant families, luckily, have preserved these *Vahi* till date. They have been written in the *bhatakshri* script and Giani Garja Singh made Gurmukhi transcripts of some of the entries that especially pertained to the lives of the Gurus.
27. This corresponds to 6th of October 1708 AD.
28. *Rahitnamas* were codes of conduct for the Sikhs. These were compiled by many devoted Sikhs outstanding among whom are Nand Lal, Prehlab Singh and Chaupa Singh.



# SOME UNIQUE FEATURES OF THE HOLY GURU GRANTH SAHIB

*Wazir Singh*

Truth, when nothing else was;  
Truth, when the process of Time started;  
Truth, what the present sustains;  
Truth, O Nanak, shall ever remain.

This is an attempted version of the preamble to Guru Nanak's Japuji, as well as a concise affirmation of the central theme of Guru Granth Sahib. As the most revered scripture of the Punjabi community, the holy Granth is unique in its status as Guru. The contents of the Granth were compiled and edited by the Gurus in person. These are neither anecdotes or life-stories, nor directives or commands to be followed. These are poetic outpourings of the divinely inspired Spirits, meant for the total welfare of humanity. The Gurus and Saint-poets as authors of the Bāni-compositions of Guru Granth Sahib, represent highly prized gems of the Indian spiritual tradition, modifying, where necessary, their conceptual intent, and divesting unhealthy elements in the conventional approach. No caste prejudice and no gender bias, no harsh austerities and no formal ritualism find place in their outlook. Rather, they commend an ethico-spiritual vision that makes for the growth of healthy personality, fraternal relations, and peace in the human world.

A few of the several unique features of the Holy Granth are presented here for consideration.

## **(1) Brides of the Lord**

One important feature of the Gurbāni compositions is the portrayal of all human beings, male and female as 'wives' of the Divine Being. It is not the spinster or unmarried damsel that is symbolized, but the devoted wife of her lord. Gurbāni expressly asserts that God is the only 'husband' and all beings are his 'brides' who for ever long His love, protection and amenities of life. The relation between the two is metaphorically depicted

in several contexts and may be interpreted as mystical union of the Lover and the Beloved. Such joyful relation is indicated by the Gurus for Man and God, leading to the spiritual bliss. Guru Amar Das, in his inimitable style, avers : Let us not treat wife and husband as a pair who share life under one roof, but the true couple is one where a single light runs through them, even though the physical bodies are two.<sup>1</sup>

What happens when the two partners are separated from each other? Such alienation of the bride from her Groom is depicted in remorseful terms : she pines for his embrace, she sheds tears and spends sleepless nights. Her longings for union are beautifully expressed in several compositions, especially in *Bārāmāha* (lit. 12 months).<sup>2</sup> When He finally arrives and casts his glance gracious on her, she considers herself the most fortunate one and enjoys his blissful company for life. This is indeed the state of human being united with the Divine. This is the ideal condition which the Gurus commend as *Jivan Mukti* or emancipation-in-life.

Christian sages talk in terms of spiritual betrothal and spiritual marriage. Taoists and Tantric authors believe the human act of love recreates the sacred marriage of heaven and earth. Mystical writers often identify the soul with the woman. The Bhakti tradition of India relates personal devotion to love of God. The uniqueness of Guru-Granth Bani lies in its nobility and sublimity. Here the romanticism is transmuted into passion for the Divine. Through the lyrical device of depicting the beloved's pain of separation, and ecstatic joy of union, the sublime path of spiritual ascent is clearly indicated. The embrace of the Spouse brings to the bride highest fulfilment and unmatched blessing.

## **(2) Philosophy of Body**

According to Gurbāni, the Light (jyoti) that unites the spouses, is the same divine light which is at the base of each and every individual. This jyoti is to be discovered and identified in one's self surrounded by the physical frame. If the spiritual element is valuable, what about the framework? Guru Amar Das is emphatic about the worth of the bodily frame. Many of the traditional thinkers condemned the body, saying it is steeped in sensuous propensities, passions and evils. The organic senses were thought to be the seat of misleading acts. But the body that contains the psychic and spiritual elements in it, how can it be termed an altogether

evil? Inside the body itself functions the mind, the thought processes occur, higher faculties perform and ultimate realization takes place. A line in Gurbāni sums up the matter thus : Inside lies a pool full of Nectar, one's quest is satisfied with its holy Word.<sup>3</sup>

The Creator has produced a 'play', and "has put everything in the physical framework." On one hand, if the body is the base of individual's egoity, on the other hand it serves as the ground for meditation and contemplation, austerities and cure for the ego. If it is wrong to consider the body as complete personality, it is also wrong not to attach any importance to it. All good and evil lies in it. To promote virtue and control vice are indicative of moral consciousness. Inside the fortress of the body are confined worldly attachments. Out of it alone can the sound of *Shabda* (the sacred Note) be heard, which denotes spiritual act. In the body are all gains and losses. Search for the golden treasure of the body leads one to the status, of Gurmukh (the, God-oriented one) —"looking within one discovers the Essence and attains one's emancipation."<sup>4</sup>

Fulfilment of the Body lies in the exercise of true contemplation, without which the body remains empty and hollow. It is worthless and knows not its direction and orientation. In the attainment of true contemplation, the holy Word of the Guru is instrumental. It puts in the hands of the seeker such enlightenment as makes him tread the path of highest values. The Guru integrates *Simran* (contemplation) with *Sevā* (service to others). A balanced life of mystical experience and action for human welfare becomes the ideal.

### (3) Height of Spirituality

The spiritual tradition of India has scaled several peaks; once in the form of Buddhist compassion, another as Sthitpragya of the Gita, then as Non-dual peak of Advaita, Sufistic cult and devotion of Bhaktas. What is common in these instances of spiritual heights is Spirit or Atman, which is believed to be present in the human personality, as well as in the cosmic order and beyond. Poetic compositions of the Guru Granth, in line with the Indian tradition, represent a uniquely high peak of spirituality, characterized as Non-Temporal Reality, namely Akaal. According to Gurbāni, the primordial/name of Reality Eternal is *Sati*, that is Satya, as distinct from its functional names. Hegel called it the

Absolute, and Shankracharya named it Brahman. *Gurbani*'s Akaal is the Supreme Being beyond Time, as well as present in all formations of time; non-qualified as well as qualified; Nirguna as well as Sagun or Sargun. Just as in Advaita, in one aspect it is Brahman, in another aspect He is Ishvar. Guru Nanak terms the Supreme Being as Gupat (latent) and Pargat (revealed).

A life of the spirit is not the monopoly of theistic believers or professional spiritualists. It is open even to the non-spiritualist, to the naturalist, to the hardcore humanist. A Buddhist by faith may not subscribe to theism, but may very well say his prayer, meditate on the teachings of Lord Buddha, and lead a life of piety. The gnostic individual of Sri Aurobindo's vision is one whose way of life, thinking and acting would be governed by the power of a vast universal spirituality. Life of spirit also means realizing "something of the immensity of our cosmic contemplations."<sup>5</sup> The spirit of Sikh spirituality is not far from the vision of these sages, with the added emphasis of its firm faith in the unicity of God and recognition of divinity in the human kind.

The Sikh spirituality enjoins upon the adherent to adopt the course of *Atam-chinan*, that is, exploration of one's self. For it is here that the Supreme Being, the Self of all selves, can be discovered and experienced. It gives the individual a feel of his ultimate concern, something that he prizes most in life. The Sikh spirituality opens up a broad vista of liberation, of emancipation-in-life through the taming of the ego.<sup>6</sup> One who treads the path indicated by *Gurbāni*, gradually sheds egoism and embraces humanism. Spirituality cannot be separated from the social concerns and spirit of well-being of humanity.

#### **(4) Expression of the Inexpressible**

Metaphysical perspective of *Gurbāni* presents a fine distinction between Being and Existence. Being is mysterious, whereas Existence is perceptible. The Divine Being in his eternal, transcendent and formless aspect cannot be known through organic or mental faculties. No one can claim to describe the nature of that being. He is really a hard nut to crack, whatever effort one may make to unravel his mystery. Most of the religious traditions believe the true nature of God defies expression. He is inexpressible, just as *Māyā* in the Advaitic philosophy is posited as *anirvachniya*, that is, indescribable. The Divine Being is believed to

be eternal. But can we really define the concept of Eternity ? For us, it is a term, a linguistic symbol representing that concept. It appears ordinary human faculties are not in a position to capture the true make-up of the Divine, nor find it possible to realize what and how of Eternity.

The Absolute or Brahman though inexpressible, may be intuitively grasped, enabling the prophets and Gurus to say something about His inner Being. He is *akath* (indescribable) yet some *kathā* (description) of His nature seems possible. Guru Nanak's poetic composition in the Māru musical measure talks in terms of the 'trance' of the Formless Spirit, the absolute Void, the 'power' of Being, his creativity, and potentiality for manifestation and self-revelation. The Guru, in line with Rigvedic creation hymn, says :

In the beginning was inexpressible darkness,  
Neither the earth nor sky there was.  
The Infinite Will alone prevailed.  
Neither day and night, nor the moon and sun did exist.  
The Absolute Void was in eternal stance. . .  
As and when He willed, He brought the world into being.  
And vaulted heavens without support.<sup>7</sup>

Here was an expression of the Inexpressible.

According to Gurbānī, the Divine Ordinance (Hukam) prevails in the cosmic order. The eternal, transcendent Being himself abides in his creation. He is immanent in the perceptible existence, or the worldly forms. He alone decides which of his creatures will be awakened and endowed with the gifts to intuitively realize the Inexpressible. Such a one is Brahmn-Gyani, knower of the secrets of creation, and in communion with the Infinite.<sup>8</sup> He rises to the height of the Divine :

As high as He, one has to be,  
Only to realize, how high is He.<sup>9</sup>

Such a one is able to share with others, to some extent at least, the expression of the Inexpressible.

### (5) Mosaic of Values

The Sikh spirituality is replete with numerous values which can be classified into different sets, such as concerns and interests of the Individual, values of Social welfare, Spiritual values and purely Divine values. The traditional Indian conception of the Spiritual Being, namely Sat-Chit-Anand, is assimilated in Guru Nanak's expression :

All hail to primal source, the sole Creator, Power :  
He is Truth, he Beauty, spirit's Joy for ever.<sup>10</sup>

Sikhism, while it recognizes the four-fold order of traditional values, viz. Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha, as a broad framework, it does not attach much of significance to renunciation and asceticism, or to the value of *Sanyās*. Instead, it favours the value of non-attachment (*nirlepatā*), equipoise (*sehaj*), ecstasy (*vismāda*), and well being of the entire mankind (*Sarbatt-dā-Bhallā*).

All the main values of Sikhism, culled from the Bāni-compositions of Guru Granth Sahib, may be arranged in system, conforming to the pattern as under :

- (a) Physico-economic values.—Fulfilment of the organic and emotional needs of the individual is covered by this category. Health is a value of the physical order accorded due place in the Bāni. The Gurus' philosophy of the Body, treating it as the sacred abode of the Spirit marks it out from the conventional approach of relegating the body to an inferior state.
- (b) Intellectual values—Knowledge and wisdom are the key concepts of this realm where reason plays the pivotal role and Truth is the highest value. Illumination of the mind, dawning of the consciousness of an endless process of creation, realization of the immensity and plurality of cosmic existence constitute the values of rational order.<sup>11</sup>
- (c) Aesthetic values—Loving devotion to the Lord Creator is in itself an aesthetic experience, generating the ecstatic state of bliss. God himself is epitomized as Anand, interpreted in terms of blissful freedom and sovereign Will. Enjoyment of God, of the gradeur and beauty of his creation, is the key to the values of aesthtic realm, which cover appreciation of creative arts, taste for poetry and music and sense for harmony.
- (d) Ethical values—Virtue is the norm of the ethical values. Its expressions are valour and purity of conduct, realization of Divine presence in all beings and dedication to the human community. Social commitment and selfless service constitute the moral dimension of values.

- (e) Spiritual values—Salvation, variously interpreted as cessation of the cycle of transmigration, attainment of the beatific vision, and realization of oneness with the ground of one's being, is the ideal most often put forward by sages and savants. Sikhism lays greatest stress on emancipation-in-life, spiritual harmony or merging with the Supreme Being, namely *Abhedatā*.<sup>12</sup>

## (6) Inter-faith Contributions

Another Unique feature of the holy Granth is the inclusion in it of Bāni-compositions of saint-poets and men of piety belonging to faiths other than Sikh religion. In the 1430-page volume currently available, besides Bāni of six Gurus, the verses of 15 Sant-Bhagats, 12 Bhatt poets, and 4 devotees and minstrels of the Guru-family are incorporated. Faith and castewise, the contributors include 5 Muslim saints (Kabir, Farid, Bhikhan, Sadhna and Mardana); 3 Brahmins (Jaidev, Ramanand and Surdas); 12 Bhatts, and one Dūm (Satta). All the six Gurus use 'Nanak' as their nom-de-plume in composing the sacred verses, indicative of the belief that the spirit of Guru Nanak was functioning in all the successor-Gurus.

Chronologically, the first authors whose verses found place in the Granth, were Jaidev and Sheikh Farid belonging to the twelfth century, while Guru Nanak was born in the fifteenth century. Guru Tegh Bahadur flourished in the seventeenth century. The Granth obviously covers a span of five centuries and the whole of northern India plus Maharashtra. The Gurus accorded a place of honour to the hymns of *bhagats* at the time of compiling the *Pothis* and the Adi-Granth volume. The criterion for the selection of hymns composed by Bhagats was resemblance with the ideology of Guru-Bāni. Guru Arjan with his authority as Editor, placed the Bhagats in a definite order, in accordance with the system laid down by him. The main ideological pattern is provided by Gurbāni, and the Bhagat-bāni either supports its line or runs parallel to it.

Evidently, both Guru-Bāni and Bhagat-Bāni incorporated in the Granth are objects of equal reverence and veneration on the part of disciples and devotees. The majority of Bhagatbāni authors had been associated with the Ramanand line of thought, and Sheikh Farid was related to the Chishti sect of Sufis. On the whole, this unrivalled

anthology is supportive of the Nirguna school, believing in the unqualified, formless Absolute, even though elements of Saguna faith in the qualified, personal aspect of the Divine are also present in it. Guru, Arjan as the Editor of the Adi Granth brought uniformity in the spellings, and word-endings, in, accordance with the grammatical system of the Granth. The conceptual terminology has a lot in common in the Gurbāni and Bhagatbāni. The jewels of both are brought together in one single, necklace.

### (7) Marvel of Editing

The onerous task of compiling the voluminous material was performed by Guru Arjan Dev. The task entailed acquisition and collection of the hymns, sifting and scrutinizing each and every verse, their metrical or musical style, their ideological base and message. Guru Arjan laid down the criteria and pattern for inclusion of the Bāni-compositions in the Granth planned by him. The first 13 pages are reserved for the daily prayer consisting of morning evening and bed-time recitation; the second part (pages 14-1352) comprises compositions arranged according to musical measures, i.e. classical Rāg system; and the final part (pages 1353 to 1430) includes metrical and miscellaneous compositions. The middle portion comprising the Rāg-arranged texts, is by far the largest part, and represents the finest gift of the editorial acumen and beautiful ordering pattern set by the Guru.

In every chapter, the Rāg-arranged hymns are divided into *padas*, *ashtpadis* special Bānis, Chhants and Vārs (odes). The stanzas of the Vārs are supplemented with *salokas* of the similar general intent; and those of the *salokas* which are in excess of the Vārs have been entered in the last part of the volume. To each and every stanza, hymn and chapter a number has been assigned in a specific numerical design, which precludes the possibility of admixture in the compositions. The grammatical scheme adopted in the Bāni renders a great help in the deciphering of its inner meaning. Guru Arjan's Bāni-compositions are available in 30 musical measures, whereas the 31st Rāg, viz. Jaijavanti, was used by Guru Tegh Bahadur, and is part of the second recension of the volume revered as Guru Granth Sahib.

The convention of editing the sacred texts was initiated during the lifetime of Guru Nanak, when he entrusted the task of editing the Japuji stanzas to Bhai Lehna,<sup>13</sup> later known as, Guru Angad Dev. The third Sri Satguru Jagjit Singh Ji eLibrary NamdhariElibrary@gmail.com



Guru in succession, Guru Amar Das supervised the collection and editing of Guru Bāni and hymns of some of the Bhagats, in the form of *pothis*. These texts and the Bani-compositions of Guru Ram Das, were passed on to Guru Arjan Dev, who became one of the most gifted Editors of the world. The detailed working out of the system and its accomplishment are really amazing. The Granth is a treasure of devotional hymnody marking out a specific way of life for the disciples and the discerning. It offers NAM *mārga*, combining the features of Gyan, Bhakti and Karma yogas, for the devotees to attain the status of Gurmukh, Brahman-Gyani, or Jivan-Mukta.

### (8) Aesthetic Impact

Guru Arjan Dev made Rāg the main basis of distribution of the sacred passages under the various headings of the holy Granth. He and other Gurus, adopting the custom popularized by the Bhakti Movement, carried forward the convention of giving the indication of *rāga* with each title of composition. Even otherwise, the custom had been pretty old. Bhagat Jaidev, whose hymns are available; in the Guru Granth, uses the *rāga* as heading in his Sanskrit anthology 'Geet Govind'. Guru Nanak had a deep sense of music. The rebeck-player, Mardana kept his company all through life. Guru Arjan Dev himself performed *kirtan* by playing the musical instrument called *saranda*. He, while editing the Bāni, kept into consideration the details of the fine elements of music, such as *rāga*, sub *rāga* *rāga* synthesis, *taal* and *ghar*, *vārs* and their styles and tunes, and pause (*Rahāo*), folk-styles and conventions, viz. Ghorī, Bārā māha, Sadd and so on.

Bāni being an exalted form of poetry, is a fine art, and Rāg by virtue of its relation with music, is another fine art. Bāni thus happens to be a meeting point of two fine arts, and when it is recited in accordance with the prescribed styles (*ritis*), its aesthetic appeal becomes redoubled and highly effective. Bāni is not limited to reading and hearing, the recitation of hymns with the accompaniment of music, known as Kirtan, is a significant element in the Sikh way of life and tradition. "O Brother, sing the Bāni," is one of the commandments of the Guru. The objective is to convey the message to the heart of the disciple, through the medium of music. In the Sikh style of music, however, primacy is accorded to the *shabad*, i. e. word of the hymn; music is not employed for the sake

of music, nor are the kinds of music and tunes employed which are exciting, sensuous or provocative. The synthesis of sacred poetry and music brings about harmony between the intellectual and emotional dimensions of human life.

The Sikh tradition of music has evolved into its specific style of Kirtan, which has become a part of the Punjabi culture. No ceremony of the Sikh people, be it a social gathering, be it a wedding, or even the last rites of the departed one, is complete without *kirtan* and recitation of the Anand. The *kirtan* is not only a source of joy and ecstasy, it brings solace and comfort in the hour of grief and sadness. The disciple of the Guru is persuaded to abide by the Divine Will (*hukam*) and remain reconciled with God's *reza*, in all situations of life. The rhythm and rhyme of Guru-Bāni and Bhagat-Bāni and their aesthetic charm so influence the spiritual and moral life of the individual that he or she comes to realize their destiny in *simran*, *seva* and *sangat*, i.e. contemplation, voluntary service and assembly of the men and women of piety. This is the beauty of spiritual creativity flowering in Gurbāni.

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# SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB AS THE LIVING, VISIBLE AND ETERNAL GURU FOR THE SIKHS

*Harnam Singh Shan*

## 1

Sri Guru Granth Sahib is the holiest scripture of the Sikhs and Sikhism. Much more than that, it is their

Guru Eternal,<sup>1</sup>

that is, their authoritative religious and spiritual guide, their preceptor and enlightener for all times. It is also for them the continuing and perpetual source of authority—religious, spiritual and temporal as well as moral, social and historical.

Hence, the Sikhs have never looked upon it as merely a book or just a religious scripture. It has all along been revered and treasured by them, all over the world, as their moot sacred and most precious possession; always adored, protected and defended even at the cost of their lives, both in war and peace as, for instance, indicated in the following note. It appears at the end of a beautifully written manuscript of this Holy Book, preserved till today in the British Museum and Library, London, under its No. Cr. 1125. It was 'captured' by Mr. H. Erskine from the camp of Raja Sher Singh on 21 February 1849 in the battle of Gujrat in which Rajas Chattar Singh and Sher Singh were finally defeated during the second Anglo-Sikh war, on the eve of the fall of Sikh kingdom and annexations of Panjab by the Britishers on 29 March 1849 :

After the Infantry charging the Enemy at Goojerat, the Cavalry and Light Artillery pursued the fugitive Sikhs and Afghans, The Infantry then advanced steadily in lien until clear of the blasing Camp, when they filed arms. It was there I found this Book in Tent of one of the hostile Chiefs—probably Sher Singh's. This is called the *Granth* or Code of Sikh Religion. It is highly prized by the Sikhs, and I have had many solicitations for it from Sikh gentlemen.

Lahore, 1849 April. Henry Erskine.<sup>2</sup>

The Sikhs cherish and revere this “highly prized” possession not only as the sacred repository of the Transcendental Wisdom or the Word Divine (ਸ਼ਬਦ *Shabd*) but also as the holy personification of their Ten Gurus in perpetuity :

The ever-living, ever-awake and ever-present;  
Embodiment of the Spirit of Ten Prophet-preceptors;  
The visible body of the Gurus; the fulfiller of  
wishes; and spiritual protector here and hereafter.<sup>3</sup>

The Most Revered Guru : The *Magnum Opus* of the Faith. It is venerated by them, thus, as both the spiritual and the physical representation of their Ten Masters, and is soulfully acknowledged as their sole Living Guru.

This is unique, therefore, in the scriptural history of the world. The renowned historian Toynbee is, hence, right to observe :

The *Adi Granth* is remarkable for several reasons. Of all known religious scriptures, this book is most highly venerated. It means more to Sikhs than even the *Quran* means to Muslims, the *Bible* to Christians and the *Tohrah* to Jews. The *Adi Granth* is the Sikhs’ perpetual Guru (spiritual guide).<sup>4</sup>

## 2

Guru Granth Sahib is, therefore,, treated by the Sikhs as the most sacred Person, their personal and ever-living Guru, “for that is, in effect, what it is”<sup>5</sup> for them. All imaginable respect and veneration is, therefore, offered to it. So, much so that they “go down on their knees to make obeisance and place offerings of cash or kind before it as they would before a king; for the *Granth* is to them what the Gurus were to their ancestors —the *Sacha Padshah* (the true Emperor).”<sup>6</sup> It is the only focus of their religious attachment and the primary focal point of their devotion, rites rituals, ceremonies, processions and congregations. It is their sole religious reference and its *Hukam* (divine order or command or pronouncement) or *Vak* (holy utterance, oracle, message, advice or instruction) directs the devout Sikhs in all their functions and activities in all walks of life, from birth to death.

Guru Granth Sahib being the pivot of Sikh devotion, the central and the holiest object of Sikh veneration, wherever “it rests or is installed, that spot or space becomes holy and beautiful :”<sup>7</sup>

Each and every Sikh place of worship, including the holiest one,

the Harimander Sahib (Golden Temple) at Amritsar, has been constructed and established as its abode, and is, therefore, called *Gurdwara* (Guru's Portal) or *Guru Ghar*<sup>8</sup> (Guru's Home). During its resting hours, it remains seated on a small but beautiful bed in its *Sukhasan sthan* (retiring room). When it is to be 'in state', it remains installed there under a beautiful canopy as the only presiding deity. A very large number of big and beautiful edifices built as its dwelling places in almost all countries of the world, where its adherents have settled, speak volumes about its unrivalled status and significance in the Sikh way of life. It remains there as the only presiding divinity and the only object of veneration. It is ever-present there as "the most lavishly bedecked, the most richly appavelled, the most magnificently-housed, the most demonstrably venerated and the most ceremoniously apotheosized book of all times and places."<sup>9</sup> When in state, (*Parkashman*), it stays seated there on a throne-like raised platform in its congregational hall and is kept opened all through the day.

No person, whosoever he or she may be, can take its place; enter its place of premises bare-headed and with shoes on; and pass by it without bowing his or her head towards it. Every body, excepting the hymn-singers (*ragis*, choristers or musicians) with their instruments, squat in front on the matted or carpetted floor; and no one is allowed to sit on a raised or cushioned seat in its presence. All are required to sit with folded hands, in a reverent posture and in respectful silence. No one, not even a Child, is allowed to turn his feet or buck towards it. Its sanctity and such extreme reverence for it is inculcated in the mind of each and every Sikh since childhood.

Guru Granth Sahib is always kept covered in clean and beautiful apparel except when it is read. Great respect and reverence is paid to it while installing, opening, reading and closing it;. All those present stand up with bowed heads and folded hands when it is brought in its congregational hall from its resting place in a procession early in the morning. After saying a short prayer, it is opened ceremoniously, it is enthroned on a high seat, on a pedestal lavishly draped in precious *rumalas* (silken or cotton scarfs) placed on quilted mats, supported by three cushions, set in a decorated palki (palanquin) with an ornate *Chanani* (canopy or awning), symbolic of royalty, hanging over it. An

officiant or a devotee standing by its side or sitting, in attendance keeps on waiving continuously but steadily a *Chaur* or *Chanwar* (flywhisk) over it, affirming its sanctity and sovereignty. When it is set 'in state', making its light (Parkash) manifest, it is uncovered and the hymn seen recorded at the top of the left-hand side is read aloud which is taken as *Vak* or *hukam* for the day. "All this ceremonious paraphernalia," says Sirdar Kapur Singh, "is nothing more than the usual symbols of royalty, enjoying sovereign powers, familiar to the East from times immemorial and in this case also, it is intended to indicate no more... To infer from this anything different, as many have done, such as that the Sikh "worship" their sacred book or the Sikhs are bibliolaters, is wholly unwarranted and misconceived."<sup>10</sup>

The *Ragis* start singing hymns in *ragas* (*Hari-Kirtan*) from its corpus and the devotees keep coming. They pay their homage by bowing low before it, touching their foreheads to the ground; making offerings and addressing it with folded hands asking for its boons and blessings in all humility, reverence and silence. On the conclusion of the *Kirtan*, a hymn is read out and expanded by the officiant or any other learned devotee. When the service neares its end, the entire *Sangat* (audience) stands up to join *Ardas* (the congregational prayer) while facing the Sacred Volume attentively with bowed heads and folded hands. The *Ardas* is led by the *Granthi Sahib* (keeper or custodian of the Holy Granth) or, in his absence, any other *Gursikh*.

Guru Granth Sahib remains in state (*parkashman*) throughout the day, and is closed after the evening services. It similarly consists of the recitation of a collection of 9 hymns (called *Rehiras*), singing of some hymns at random, *Katha* (discourse) from the Sikh chronicles, taking of a *Vak* and saying of closing *Ardas*. It is then wrapped in silken or cotton rumalas while reciting hymns (*Kirtan Sohila*) in a chorus and is taken in a procession to its resting place, and put on a bed (*Sukhasan*) to rest for the night.

The same practice and procedure is observed in several Sikh homes which also maintain the Holy Granth and set apart a special room for it, which is generally called *Baba Sahib Da* or *Guru Maharaj Da Kamra*. It is opened in the morning by a member of the family after taking a bath (*ishnan*) and wearing neat clothes, and is closed in the evening in

the same manner. Other members of the family also go there, as early as they can, to pay their homage, say their prayer, obtain the *Hukam* or *Vak* for the day, and generally continue with their *Sahaj* or *Khulla Path*. This is privately undertaken with slow reading of the Sacred Volume from beginning to end which may take a month or even a year to complete.

Such complete readings or recitals of all the 1430 pages of Guru Granth Sahib are varied in nature, time and scope, according to one's wish or a specific occasion—in "times of uncertainty and difficulty or in times of celebration and hope."<sup>11</sup> The most significant and the holiest is the one which is called *Akhand Path* or the fortyeight hours' non-stop and uninterrupted recital of the Holy Granth and which is accomplished by a relay of reciters in a single service. Historical events of the Sikh history like the birth and martyrdom anniversaries of the Gurus; important ceremonies in Sikh families like marriages and obsequies; and special prayers seeking blessings for common various undertakings, fulfilling cherished desires as well as for offering thanks for the success achieved or boons bestowed, centre mostly upon such ceremonial readings which are arranged in especially decorated Gurdwaras, homes or purposely erected pavillions with Guru Granth Sahib installed on a throne. There is another recitation known as *Saptah* or *Saptahik Path* which requires seven-day reading the entire text in parts at one's own convenience. It is also of a prescribed religious observance and is undertaken as a mark of supplication on special occasions, like the Bhog ceremony that marks the conclusion of obsequies. The Holy Granth is not merely read, but is recited or intoned during these *paths*. The devotees come to listen to these as they wish, while sitting in silence in front of it. Their conclusion is followed by the holding of congregations, chanting of hymns, saying of prayer, distribution of grace-offerings (*Karah-parshad*) and serving of community lunches (*langar parshad*) or refreshments.

### 3

Besides the observance of this daily routine and various festive occasions requiring its Presiding Presence in the Sikh temples and homes, Guru Granth Sahib also presides over all religious, social and even political gatherings of the Sikhs in and outside the Gurdwaras. Its advice, instruction and guidance is sought before the start of functions or

deliberations by offering a short prayer and taking a *Vak* or *Hukam* (divine command). The decisions taken thereafter are held sacred and binding not only on the individuals but also, at times, on the entire Sikh community at home and abroad. The *Hukamnamas* (edicts) of the *Akal Takht* at Amritsar, the Supreme Spiritual-cum-Temporal Seat of the Sikh religion, binding on the whole Sikh world, are also issued in its Presence and under its authority as per tradition.

Guru Granth Sahib is essentially and physically Present in the centre of almost all ritual and ceremonial occasions concerning the life of a Sikh, right from his/her birth to his/her last breath. All their rites are performed in its sound and sight. So much so that the new-born baby is named in its Presence and that too by taking the first consonant of the very first line of its *Vak* or *Hukam*. No Sikh marriage is considered religiously sanctified, socially acceptable and legally valid unless it is performed in its Presence with the bride and bridegroom reverently circumambulating it four times while the nuptial hymns contained in it are recited and sung, and congregational prayers are said while they stand as faithfals in front of it with bowed heads and folded hands.

It also heads all big and colourful processions of the Sikhs, placed on a lavishly decorated elephant's open *howdah* or on a properly bedecked vehicle.

It is always carried on a person's head while taking it ceremonially from one place to another over short distances, and is conveyed with due reverence in a suitable carriage for long distances.

Its direction, permission and blessing is usually sought by the devout almost in all walks of life, for instance, on the eve of commencing a task, undertaking a job, departing for a journey, constructing a building, and taking a decision concerning his own and his/her family's life, by saying a short prayer standing, opening it at random and reading any complete hymn which catches his or her eye at the first sight. Not only the individual Sikhs, but also the Sikh community, the Khalsa Panth, seeks through its leaders its much-needed guidance, direction and benediction and even its verdict in time of crisis in moments of perplexity on the praxis and difference of opinion on various problems of the community by bowing and praying before it in a similar manner in all reverence. Violating any pledge taken or breaking any promise made in its Holy Presence is considered sinful.



Although there is no place of idolatry in Sikhism, the great sanctity and the ceremonious paraphernalia associated with the service and maintenance of Guru Granth Sahib as well as the extreme reverence shown to it by the Sikhs, is sometimes misunderstood and inferred as its idolization and worship.<sup>12</sup> Hence said Professor Teja Singh, The doyen of Sikh Studies, in early nineteen-fifties : “These signs of royalty and marked attention paid by Sikhs to the Holy Book—especially when it is exaggerated by ignorant people—give an impression to others that Sikhs worship their Book. This is wrong. Sikhs are enjoined to worship nothing but the Name (see Guru Nanak’s Sri Rag, viii.3). They can offer respect to any person or thing worthy of praise, but worship is due to God alone.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps the bowing of Sikhs before the Book is misunderstood by Westerners whose way of salutation is different. They kiss their Book as Sikhs bow before theirs, both conforming to the local custom of paying respect. Both ways of salutation are highly personal. but they cannot be called idolatry, as long as the book is not given the place of God. In Sikhism the highest respect is paid to the Law, which stands ever above the king. The Sovereignty of the *Shabd* or the Word was acknowledged even by the Gurus who bowed before it in reverence.’

Reiterating this fact and view-point in his own scholarly way, Sirdar Kapur Singh, asserts, again, “The reverence which is shown to the Guru Granth Sahib by the Sikhs is not bibliolatry, for they do not worship any forms or images. It is the visible Body of all the Gurus, for, it is a perceivable record of the Transcendental Wisdom, and the collective entity of the *Panith* in synarchy with the Guru Granth is invested with *sui generis* sovereignty, temporal and spiritual both. If a deity is defined as an immortal god, while a divinity as that mortal entity which possesses divine qualities, then we may say that the Granth is a divinity, but not a deity, and thus it cannot be and is not an object of worship by the Sikhs though seemingly extreme reverence is shown to it by them as the ‘Visible Body of the Guru’, and Oriental formal homage is paid to it as it is symbolic of Sikh sovereignty.”<sup>14</sup>

In spite of all that homage and reverence extended to Guru Granth Sahib and all those customs and ceremonies connected with it, it “is even today,” tells S. Khushwant Singh, “not like the idol in a Hindu

temple nor the statue of the Virgin in a Catholic Cathedral.” It is neither any “aural icon for the Sikhs.”<sup>15</sup> Hence adds Khuswant Singh, “It is the means and not the object of worship”<sup>16</sup> for or by the Sikhs. It is treated by them as “Word-incarnate, the embodiment and presence manifest or the spirit of their ten historical Gurus (Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh)” It is also for them “the perennial fountain of inspiration and the means of self-perpetuation for the community.”<sup>16A</sup>

## 5

Such an extreme veneration, exalted status and unrivalled position of Guru Granth Sahib in the Sikh way of life and tradition is due to the fact that it, primarily, enshrines the revelations and holy utterances of the Sikh Gurus, called Gurbani in the Sikh parlance.

*Gurbani* or *Bani* is virtually the Word (ਸ਼ਬਦ *Shabd*) revealed by God direct to those prophet-preceptors of the Sikhs who were under His direct commission and who themselves had vouched it as of Divine origin echoing the Divine truth :

The Utterance has come from the Primal Divine Source.

It has annulled all anxiety.

The Compassionate Being has showered His grace.

Nanak proclaims this truth to all.<sup>17</sup>

The Gurus were the proclaimers or the revealers of the Word Divine, the Divine Utterance or the Voice of God :

God merged His Self in the Guru

through whom He revealed and dispensed His Word.<sup>18</sup>

The Word that God has lodged in the True Guru

the True Guru has revealed, and proclaimed that to all.<sup>19</sup>

The disciples of the Guru look upon the words of the True Guru as true and holy for ever :

Believe ye, Sikhs !

the Words of the Guru

to be true, ever true;

As it is the Lord-Creator himself

who makes him utter these by his mouth.

(i.e., speaks through the Guru's word.)<sup>20</sup>

And it has been communicated, disseminated and also recorded by the Gurus themselves in this holy Granth :

As the Word of the Lord descends to me

So I make it known, O Lalo !<sup>21</sup>

The Sikhs, the disciples of the Guru, believe, therefore, that,  
The Word of the Guru is Divine  
and Union with God is attained through this Word.”<sup>22</sup>

Not only that. According to its holy compiler and editor, Guru Arjan Dev (1563-1606), It is God’s own repository :

The Holy Granth is the dwelling place of God,  
For, it is the embodiment of the perfect Divine Wisdom  
Whoever shall sing its words of Divine laudation,  
in the holy congregation,  
shall acquire it.<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, according to Guru Amar Das (1479-1574), the third Master :

The revealed Word of the Guru  
is the Light of the World.  
And God’s grace descends into human soul  
by means of it.<sup>24</sup>

Hence, the followers of the Sikh Faith do not look upon Guru Granth Sahib in the aspect only of a mere book or a scripture. It is for them the visible form of the Divine Essence, the Supreme Being Himself in the form of his Word or Utterance, as they have been told so clearly that—

Glory be to the Divine Word,  
Which is the Formless Lord Himself.  
There is none other,  
nothing else to be reckoned equal to it.<sup>25</sup>

According to Guru Angad Dev (1504-1552), their Second prophet-preceptor,

The ambrosial Word of the Master  
that expounds the Divine Essence,  
has descended through enlightenment and meditation  
The God-oriented have uttered this and realised this;  
and the enlightened have meditated on it  
by the Divine Grace.<sup>26</sup>

The ten Gurus are the spiritual masters, the prophet-preceptors of the Sikhs. Their *Shabd* for them is the Word Divine and their *Bani*, the Holy Utterance, as stated by their Fourth Master, Guru Ram Das (1534-1581), as below in the Holy Granth itself, while equating and identifying it with the Guru Himself :

The Word is the Guru and the Guru is in the Word;  
all nectars are contained in the Word.

If the disciple obeys what the Word says,  
 the Guru becomes manifest and saves him.<sup>27</sup>  
 The Holy Guru is the Holy Word.  
 And the Holy Word is the Holy Guru himself  
 which shall lead one to the way of salvation.<sup>28</sup>

As the Holy Granth contains such revealing statements of the Sikh Gurus themselves, it is the repository of their sacred Words and holy utterances. It is regarded by the Sikhs, therefore, as the continuing manifestation, the embodiment in visible form of the mystic personality of their Ten Divine Masters.

What is more, the blessed founder of their faith, Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1539), has stated those Words and Utterances to be the 'ਖਸਮ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ' (Lord's own Word) and 'ਬਾਣੀ ਮਹਾਪੁਰਖ ਕੀ' (Word of the Supreme being):

This Word is of the Supreme Being  
 and enables the self to abide in its true home.<sup>29</sup>

Speaking as witness to revelation, he has also stated in verses such as the following :

I spoke only when You, O God,  
 inspired me to speak.<sup>30</sup>  
 I know not myself what to say.

I have communicated only the command of God.<sup>31</sup>

Believing these, therefore, as the Revealed Words, the Words of the Divine Origin; and the Holy Volume that enshrines these as the medium and record of the revelation, thus descended through the Gurus, the Sikhs look upon it as the embodiment of the Word of God as well as the holy spirit, 'the visible body' and the 'living presence' of their Gurus. They have been enjoined to do so by their Tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708), whose last commandment they chant as follows, asserting this belief collectively and loudly, on the conclusion of their daily individual and congregational morning and evening supplication called *Ardas* :

As commanded by the Timeless One,\*  
 I promulgated the Order of Khalsa.  
 All Sikhs are hereby commanded

\* Alternative renderings : (i). As the Person visible of the Gurus.  
 (ii). As the embodiment of the Spirit of Guru.

to own the Granth as their Guru.  
 Venerate and obey Guru Granth Sahib,  
 as the Manifest Body of the Holy Gurus.\*  
 They who wish to meet the Lord,  
 should seek Him in the Word enshrined in it... \*\*<sup>32</sup>

Hence says Duncan Greenlees, the celebrated author of the *World Gospel Series* : “The Guru Granth is the Guru’s Own Book through which the Guru speaks to His disciples from age to age. Thus it is also called Gurbani, the Guru’s voice. He who attentively reads, sings or listens to its hymns is brought into direct personal contact with the Guru, who is, in a very real sense, ‘incarnate’ in these hymns.”<sup>33</sup>

## 6

Not only the disciples, the Gurus themselves had always considered these hymns sacred and treated their anthology with great respect and reverence even before Guru Granth Sahib was compiled in its final form and installed as such by Guru Gobind Singh in 1708 at Nanded (Maharashtra).

Guru Arjan Dev, its holy compiler-cum-editor, went personally to Goindwal to obtain some Pothis (handwritten collections of hymns containing the holy utterances of his predecessors) from Baba Mohan who inherited those from his father, Guru Amar Das, and was very adamant to part with the same. These Pothis were brought to Amritsar on a bedecked palanquin, the Sikhs carrying it on their shoulders and the Guru himself walking behind barefoot. According to Kavi Sohan, “he refused to ride his horse, saying that the Pothis were the very spirit, the very light of the Four Gurus-his predecessors.” So tells Sohan, the author of *Gurbilas* :

In spite of repeated requests by all, he refused to ride his horse, saying that “the *pothis* were the embodiment of the spirit, the very light of the four Gurus (i.e. his spiritual predecessors). That act would, therefore, amount to great sacrilege. It is, therefore, just and proper to walk behind it barefoot.”<sup>34</sup>

When the great and arduous task involved in the meticulous collection, selection, composition, compilation and editing of the sacred

\* Alternative rendering : Shall discover Him in the Word manifested in the Holy Granth.

\*\* That is. God. the Immortal Lord.

writings which went into the making of the Holy Granth, was accomplished in 1604 at Ramsar in the outskirts of Amritsar, Guru Arjan Dev celebrated the momentous event with great jubilation. It was taken then to the Harimandir Sahib, the Golden Temple, the construction of which was completed three years earlier, in a reverent and colourful procession. The Highly venerable Baba Buddha (1506-1651) who was appointed its first *Granthi* (keeper or custodian) carried it on his head and Guru Arjan Dev walked behind reverently waving the fly-whisk over it as a sign of great respect :

It was ceremoniously installed there on 16 August 1604 in the inner sanctuary in such a way that the devotees while bowing to it must face east.<sup>35</sup>

While the Holy Volume was being placed and set on a beautiful cot, Guru Arjan, whose own contribution to it is the biggest, himself sat by its side on the floor. When Bhai Buddha opened the Volume, then named and called Pothe Sahib (Revered Book), to obtain the *Vak* or *Hukam*, for the inaugural as well as the thanksgiving ceremony, Guru Arjan Dev stood behind in attendance. The following hymn that caught his attention at the first sight was read aloud and was considered as God's Own pronouncement for that historic and blissful occasion :

God Himself has been present  
to fulfil the tasks of His devotees.  
He Himself has come  
to get these tasks accomplished....  
He Whose task it was  
has Himself consummated it.  
Else what can a mere human do?...  
He who is devoted to the Name of God  
his mind and body are imbued with the Lord's Nectar.

Nanak prays in gratitude :

"My desire is fulfilled, O God;  
I find life in seeing thy vision."<sup>36</sup>

After expressing, thus, his deep sense of gratitude to God, Guru Arjan Dev addressed the congregation and said, according to the *Gurbilas Chhevin Patshahi*,

Listen you all to my directive  
and believe it as ever true.  
Accept the Granth as equal with the Guru  
and think no distinction between the two.<sup>37</sup>

According to the *Gur Partap Suraj Granth* also, Sri Guru told them that

“God is ‘incarnate’ in this sacred Volume.”<sup>38</sup>

These chronicles also tell us that when the Holy Granth was closed after the evening service, it was taken to its resting place and was laid to rest on a bedecked cot. Guru Arjan Dev, so says Bhai Santokh Singh, himself slept by its side on the ground,<sup>39</sup> indicating thus the high esteem and profound reverence in which he held it. According to the author of the said *Gurbilas*, which was completed only ten years after the passing away of Guru Gobind Singh, Guru Arjan Dev made it a routine thenceforth :

He used to Sleep on the ground daily  
by its side after saying prayers,  
Owning the Holy Granth  
equal with the Supreme Being.<sup>40</sup>

And there could be no doubt about it as he himself had declared in the *Pothi Sahib* itself, as mentioned above :

Pothi, ‘the abode of God.’<sup>41</sup>

No other holy scripture of any religion all over the world is known to have received such respect and reverence, to such an extent, not only from its followers but also from those holy beings who composed, compiled and prepared it for all humans, in general, and for its adherents in particular.

According to Guru Nanak Dev, the first Prophet-preceptor, with whose masterpiece, the *Japu*, this unique scripture opens, the *Sabd* (ਸਬਦ), the Revealed Word, is the True Preceptor and Guide of great profundity and inscrutability.<sup>42</sup>

It is the only means and medium of communication between God and human beings :

From the Word Divine we attain to God  
And imbibe love for His Name.<sup>43</sup>

He assured them :

Those united with God  
by means of the Divine Word  
are parted never again.<sup>44</sup>

Bhai Mani Singh Shaheed (martyred in 1737) tells us so, in this context :

Pritha and Khera Soini came to Kartarpur to have a glimpse of the True Guru, Guru Nanak Dev.... They prayed to be allowed to settle down at his feet... The True Guru said, "Go to the dharamshala (Sikh place of worship) twice a day—in the morning as well in the evening.....Eat what you earn through toil and share your earnings with those who visit you in need. Then you are always close to my feet. My body is *Sarguna-rup* (possessing all qualities or attributes). The Word is my heart. It is *Nirguna-rup* (Without qualities or attributes) of any kind. If you attach yourself with my body, you shall have to be separated. But if you will merge yourself in the Word, you will not have to part with again."<sup>45</sup>

Moreover, salvation, the True Guru maintained, is obtained Only by hearkening; to the holy Word and meditating upon the divine Name :

He who reflects on the True Word with loving devotion,  
attains to the Gate of Salvation.  
For, the essence of all penances and. meditation  
lies in the contemplation of the divine Word.<sup>46</sup>

Such holy 'utterances' of Guru Nanak as well as those of his spiritual successors, called Bani or Gurbani, embody this Word Divine which Guru Arjan Dev, the Fifth in his apostolic line, collected and compiled, alongwith his own compositions, in the first corpus of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. According to Prof. Teja Singh, "From the very start Guru Arjan intended Granth Sahib to be not only the scripture of the Sikhs but more than that to take the place of a living Guru.....Guru Arjan himself had stated and so had his predecessors, that in reality it was the Word that was the Guru."<sup>47</sup>

Not only his holy predecessors, his spiritual successors had also held and projected the same view. According to Bhai Santokh Singh, the seventh prophet-preceptor, Guru Har Rai (1630-1661), had so emphatically said,

Whoever is our devotee or disciple,  
he must revere Gurbani with all his heart.  
Whoever does not revere the Guru's hymns,  
know him not to be our Sikh.<sup>47A</sup>

Describing the occasion of this observation, it is stated that when some Sikhs singing hymns from the Granth Sahib visited the Guru, he, happened to be lying on the couch. On hearing the hymns, he immediately



arose. When asked the reason, he said,

Hear, my beloved Sikhs! the Guru is embodied in compositions whose sanctity is immeasurable and unrivalled. The Guru's instruction is a raft to cross over the fiery ocean of the world. It conferreth happiness on the true Guru's Sikhs, and removeth sin from the hearts of the readers... It produceth divine knowledge and dispelleth ignorance. He who payeth respect to the Guru's hymns, shall without effort cross over the terrible ocean of the world, for, great is their efficacy.... The Sikh who acteth according to the Guru's instruction, shall obtain the supreme dignity. It is only he who hath no devotion or faith, who reverenceth not the Guru's words, Without reverence devotion is not obtained and without devotion there is no holiness. Without holiness how can there be deliverance? And without deliverance the soul shall be subject to further transmigration and shall not be absorbed in God. It is incumbent on the Sikhs to obtain happiness by pondering on the Guru's words. Pilgrimage, fasting, sacrifice and painful austerities are of no avail. The Guru's saint is my Sikh, and delighteth in the Guru's hymns. Be assured that he who doth not, is no Sikh of mine.<sup>47B</sup>

Bawa Sarup Das Bhalla tells us that when Guru Hari Krishan (1656-1664), the Eighth in this aposlic line, was going to leave this world for his heavenly abode, the prominent Sikhs present there gathered courage to ask :

How would we be able to see you daily?

How would we be in a position to serve you?

Wherein would you now manifest your Light?

Pray tell us, your servants, the mystery implied in it.<sup>48</sup>

Consoling them the Guru said,

Gurus may die but their hearts, that is, the Granth Sahib, shall remain with you. It containeth instructions, divine knowledge, and the Guru's spell. It will satisfy all men's desires. Read it and act on the counsels, and Guru Nanak will ever assist you.<sup>49</sup>

Thus the holy word enshrined in Granth Sahib was always cherished and held in great veneration not only by the disciples (Sikhs) of the Gurus but also by the Gurus themselves. They always believed it to be God's Own Word, Holy Utterance of the Supreme Being, and have all along been exhorting them to sing it, to meditate upon it :

Sing ever, on waking, the Word of God,

Contemplate the Lord day and night.<sup>50</sup>

Meditate on the Word of God  
that has been uttered by the Holy.  
with God's Name on their tongue.<sup>51</sup>

Come, O loving disciples of the Guru;  
sing the True Word,  
Sing the Word of the Guru,  
Which is supreme over all words.<sup>52</sup>

Hence, the beloved disciples of the holy preceptor responded to their calls and exhortations, and that too because—

Nanak, the servant of God,  
utters but the Ambrosial Word  
Which is sweet and pleasing  
to the hearts of the Guru's disciples.<sup>53</sup>

And also because it emanated from divine inspiration and enshrined thus the Divine Wisdom—

Nanak, the servant of God,  
utters the Words of Divine contemplation.  
Whoever listens to and acts upon these,  
swims across the ocean of existence.<sup>54</sup>

Besides, it also enables them to realize the Lord and to remain absorbed in Him, as advised thus by Guru Amar Das, the Third Divine Master (1479-1574) :

O my mind ! chant the praise of the Ever-Blissful.  
Who is realised through the True Word  
that keeps one absorbed ever in Him.<sup>54A</sup>

## 7

So, the doctrine that the holy Word, enshrined in the Holy Granth, was of divine origin and that "the Word is the holy Guru and the holy Guru is his Word," is most explicitly and repeatedly laid down in the Sacred Volume itself.<sup>55</sup> The profound reverence and high homage that had been paid to it not only by the disciples but also by the Gurus themselves, as illustrated above, is quite evident from the contents of the Holy Book itself. Hence, "one day" the Word recorded therein "was to take the place of the Guru. The line of personal Gurus could not have continued for ever. The inevitable came to pass when Guru Gobind Singh," the last Guru in the human form, "declared Granth Sahib to be his successor. It was only through the Word that the Guruship could be made everlasting. This object Guru Gobind Singh intuitively secured

when he pronounced Granth Sahib to be Guru after him. The Guru Granth Sahib was henceforth—for all time to come—the Guru for the Sikhs.”<sup>56</sup> Moreover, “the Gurus had led the Sikhs from generation to generation in the practice of qualities which make a great nation; and now that the task was over, the last of them merged his personality in the ranks of his disciples. All Sikh history has been moving towards this divine event. There was to be no personal Guru in future. The whole Sikh community, in its organised form, called the *Panth*, was to guide itself by the teachings of the Gurus as incorporated in the Holy Granth, and also by the collective sense of the community.”<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, all “the ten Gurus were one and the first Guru’s original plan was duly executed. The Granth Sahib was complete with the Ninth Guru’s Baanee and it was now Baanee Guru, as it had been from the very start. It is easy to accept that the Tenth Guru-King finally acknowledged it as the Baanee Guru as well as the eternal person-Guru.”<sup>58</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh installed the Holy Granth as such on 6 October 1708 A.D., the day before he passed away, at Nanded (Maharashtra), as recorded by Bhatt Narbad Singh, who was then present with him, in his scroll, called *Bhatt Vahi*, as under :

Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Master, son of Guru Tegh Bahadur, grandson of Guru Hargobind, great-grandson of Guru Arjun : of the family of Guru Ram Das; Suraj bansi, Gosal class, Sodhi Khatri; resident of Anandpur, pargana Kahlur; now at Nanded, on the Godavari bank in the Deccan; asked Bhai Daya Singh, on Wednesday, Shukla Chauth of the month of Katik, 1765 EK. (October 6, 1708 A.D.) to fetch the Sri Granth Sahib. In obedience to his orders, Daya Singh brought forth Sri Granth Sahib. The Guru placed before it five pice and a coconut and bowed his head before it. He then said to the Sangat, “It is my commandment : Own Sri Granth Ji in my place. He who so acknowledges it, will obtain his reward (blessings). The Guru will rescue him. Know this as truth.”<sup>59</sup>

Ending thus the line of the living human Gurus and ordering his disciples to “own Sri Granth Ji in his place,” Guru Gobind Singh appointed this Sacred Scripture not only his eternal successor but also the Final Master and the Guru Eternal for the Sikhs. Moreover, he extended the same sort of veneration to it as Guru Nanak Dev had paid to Guru Angad Dev while appointing him as his spiritual successor in 1539. The

*Granth* thus became the Guru ‘overnight’ and was conferred with the holiest and the highly exalted spiritual status by a formal investiture of spiritual authority at the hands of the last living Guru himself. This too is unique in the scriptural annals of the world. “The Holy Books of other religions attained this distinction gradually through tradition and without a formal spiritual conferment.”<sup>60</sup>

After this unprecedented eventful conferment, the Holy *Granth* which was entitled *Pothi Sahib* by its holy compiler, Guru Arjan Dev, and its learned amanuensis, Bhai Gurdas (1551-1636), in 1604 at Amritsar; and which began to be called *Granth Sahib* or *Sri Granth* when Guru Gobind Singh updated and recensed it in 1706 at Damdama Sahib (in Talwandi Sabo, district Bathinda) came to be known, called and revered as *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, the personification of the Sikh Guru in perpetuity.

## 8

There is a lot of contemporary and near-contemporary evidence, bequeathed to us through oral and written tradition, that fully corroborates the above testimony of Bhatt Narbad Singh.

It is more than enough to authenticate therewith the fact of this Holy *Granth* having been apotheosized and installed thus, and also invested that way with the final authority as the ever living, ever visible and eternal Guru for the Sikhs by Guru Gobind Singh himself before leaving his mortal body. It has ever since been central to all that pertains to Sikh life, literature and culture; to its usage, history and tradition.

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17. Guru Arjan Dev, *Guru Granth Sahib*, Rag Sorath, p. 628.
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19. *Ibid.*, Rag Asa, p. 466.
20. Guru Ram Das, *Ibid.*, Rag Gauri, p. 308.
21. Guru Nanak Dev, *Ibid.*, Rag Tilang, p. 722.
22. Guru Amar Das, *ibid.*, Rag Siri, p. 39.
23. Guru Arjan Dev, *ibid.*, Rag Sarang, p. 1226.
24. Guru Amar Das, *ibid.*, Rag Siri, p. 67.
25. Guru Amar Das, *ibid.*, Rag Gujri, p. 515.
26. Guru Angad Dev, *ibid.*, Rag Sarang, p. 1243.
27. Guru Ram Das, *ibid.*, Rag Nat Narayan, p. 982.  
Alternative rendering : “The Revelation is the Guru and the Guru is the Revelation ..... Whosoever shall accept the Revelation of the Guru, shall behold the Guru himself.” —*Parasraprasna*, op. cit., p. 171.
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# RECENT WORLD THOUGHT AND SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB

*Gurbhagat Singh*

## I

The purpose of this paper is to elaborate the relevance of Sri Guru Granth Sahib in relation to recent world thought which here means major trends of thought in the twentieth century. These trends have manifested in Levi-Strauss's Structuralism emphasizing cultural structures as sign systems, Buber's and Levinas's philosophical anthropology understanding the Other as wholly Other—transcendent and irreducible, Lyotard's and Derrida's postmodernism/poststructuralism attacking totality and unitary meaning, Irigaray's and Cixous's feminism differentiating between the male and the female based on their separate ways of entering culture and language ("the Symbolic") and therefore asking for differential re-organization of civilizational structures, Deleuze's and Guattari's notions of territorialization and deterritorialization, Taylor's and some others' multiculturalism articulating history-specific semiotic ontology of each culture and the desire to mediate and be mediated by the Other. It is not difficult to comprehend that a revolution in thought has occurred.

In all these philosophical perspectives, the radical concern is to dismantle Absolutism of all kinds and de-ontologize, that is, to shake the firm and alienated being of a culture, the individual, and institutions that shape and get shaped. The two major systems of thought that have radicalized the above mentioned philosophical perspectives are : Quantum thought and Marxism. Quantum thought is stimulated by Quantum Physics. Roland Omnes, Professor of Physics in Paris, in his book *Quantum Philosophy* calls Quantum ideas as "equivalent to an epistemological earthquake" (Omnes, 1999 : xxi). The Quantum had challenged the classical way of relying upon stable concepts regarding the external reality as separated from the subject or experimental and



observing apparatus. The Reality is too complex or mysterious for absolute and permanent conceptualization.

There are three major influential ideas that the Quantum has established : first is of Max Planck who discovered in 1901 that the material radiant objects or atoms moving in the universe are discrete natural units or packets of energy. In 1913 Niels Bohr added to it that the movement of these radiant objects is in “jerks” or leaps. In simple words, these jerks, then, make interaction with other radiant objects “probabilistic,” which means the interaction caused cannot be fully determined, only in degree. In this process, the “experimental arrangement” that also includes the observing subject and his/her consciousness also cannot be ignored as the classicists do. In his lectures published in 1963 under the title *Atomic Physics and Human Knowledge* Niels Bohr says clearly: “... this interaction, thus forms an inseparable part of the phenomenon. Accordingly, the unambiguous account of proper quantum phenomena must in principle include a description of all relevant features of the experimental arrangement” (1963: 4). The “standpoint of the observer and “word-consciousness (Ibid., 14) are also important. In this process of knowledge, the “contraposition” of both “subject and object” is vital. The subject object interaction in knowledge is the second significant idea of the Quantum. Niels Bohr has named it as “complementarity” in which the observer is both an actor and a spectator.

The third major idea of the Quantum is contributed by Heisenberg who in 1927 stated that matter and radiation have a “duality of character.” They have the property of particles and waves, it is difficult to specify the position and wave character of the particle. Therefore knowledge about them will be “uncertain” or “indeterminate,” only probable or “potent” in the Aristotelian sense. In his “Introductory” to *The Principles of the Quantum Theory* Heisenberg says : “... it is seen that both matter and radiation possess a remarkable duality of character, as they sometimes exhibit the properties of waves, at other times those of particles... the two concepts are too different” (Heisenberg, 1930: 10). What he implies is that in the process of combining them there will remain a chasm and the knowledge attained will be uncertain to the combiner or observer.

The three ideas of the Quantum, i.e., quantum jumps, complementarity, and uncertainty, in the words of Professor FSC Northrop who wrote Introduction to Heisenberg's *Physics and Philosophy*, "restore the concept of potentiality to the object" (Heisenberg, 1999: 19), "there is no *a-priori* empirical meaning" (*Ibid.*, 17). The observing instruments, the common language, local space and time have also become important. Once *a-priori* meaning is gone, then any absolute, hegemonic meaning for all, is also dismantled. An individual, a culture, has to confirm paradigms about the external reality according to its experience, but at the same time the indeterminacy of the universe has also been given a tentative unity of the universe through the idea of "quarks," the fundamental entities that constitute the particles anywhere. Professor Roland Omne thinks that the profundity and constancy of the reality in the Quantum evoke "a sense of Beauty" that can be revealed in the "supreme economy of means" (Omnes, 1999 : 265).

The vital theme of Marxism is revolutionary "change." Its most influential idea is in Marx's *Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*: "The mode of production of material life conditions, the social, political and influential life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their consciousness of men, but on the contrary, the social being that determines their consciousness" (Marx and Engles, 1977: 191). To transform being also includes dismantling those signs or sign systems that enforce or repeat the oppressive/territorializing regimes of knowledge and politico-economic networks. The end is to organize a just society in which all the senses of a human being may function authentically. As Derrida interprets Marx in his lectures published under the title *Spectres of Marx*, Marx was not after calculated justice, but justice as a gift when one is in relationship with others in the sense of Levinas which is relating to 'Others in the Others' transcendent light. It is de-totalizing the Other recognizing and experiencing the Other's singularity (Derrida, 1994: 23). From this perspective Marxism has an emancipatory "messianic promise," although it remains unfulfilled (*Ibid.*, 91).

## II

The major theme of Sri Guru Granth Sahib is emancipation or *mukti* of humankind. For this event of emancipation—communion between

the seeker-person and Karta Purakh has to occur. But how is that to be brought about? This question and its related problematic the Granth repeats over and over, and then also provides the answer. Like the complex, constant Quantum universe transcending individual perspectives, Karta Purakh is infinite : *anant.asgah*; no experimental apparatus or the seeker-consciousness is adequate enough to comprehend and experience Him. His immensity and heterological genius causes *Vismād*, joyous wonder. Watching His own vast creation He Himself remains in *Vismād*” says Mahla 1 in *Āsā ki Vār* (Shabdarth Sri Guru Granth Sahib, 1986: 464). In Rāg Maru, the Guru Says “when the enlightened seeker-person meets with the Vismādic One he/she becomes absorbed in *Vismād* and sings His excellences” (Ibid., 1036).

The event of communion between Karta Purakh and the seeker-person is not just of “complementarity” but more than that it is of joyous wonder and song. In other words, the event is of abandon and excess. It is of the enjoining of the lights, the one installed in the seeker by Karta Purakh and the Other Karta Purakh’s own. But the meeting of lights or the causation of the event of communion is His Blessing, Kindness or Gift. In Sri Rāg Mahla 3 says that “With His Kindness (*nadar*) He Himself causes the enjoining” (Ibid., 36). In Sri Rag the Guru says: “There is one gift giver of all, the enjoiner of the Light with the Light” (Ibid., 68). Enjoining, therefore, is His gift, His *dat*, His *nadar*.

By relating the event of communion or enjoining to gift giving of Karta Purakh, Sri Guru Granth Sahib presents this universe as of mystery and indeterminacy. It means beyond calculation. Realization of the universe or its knowledge in the Quantum sense, cannot be obtained simply by determination, it is a happening that depends on *dat*, but the seeker-person or the “observing apparatus” has definitely to be adequate and minimally interfering. In the sense of the Granth, the person has to be *nirmal*, pious or without any obstructive blemish/bias of his/her consciousness. But the “condition of being *nirmal*, of becoming *Amrit* or Nectar, is also a gift of the Great Guru,” the Vismādic One, says Mahla 3 in Rāg Mājh (Ibid., 121).

The most obstructive element in the consciousness of the seeker-person that stands in the way of the enjoining event is ego or *haumai*.

*Haumai* is the belief in the inflated self or ultimacy of individual identity. *Haumai* is to be checked. The seeker has to have faith in *nadar* or indeterminacy/mystery of the universe. Being with *haumai* means being led by the mind or *mana* that stops the happening of the enjoining event which is the moment of sacred jouissance, of intense joy. In Sri Rāg Mahla 1 says : “If the mentation of the mind dies, only then the seeker-bride enjoys the Beloved” (Ibid., 8). For dismantling ego one has to attain to the condition of being in *sahaj* or cosmic equilibrium, but it is not simply through hard work. Even daily discipline through good action does not let one accomplish *sahaj*, nor does it obliterate illusion. Only the gift or *parsād* of the Great Guru obliterates illusion, says Mahla 3 in Ramkali Anand :

Says Nanak by the *parsād* of the Guru  
*sahaj* develops only thus vanishes illusion

(Ibid., 519)

In one respect the Granth is ahead of the recent Quantum and other thought systems, that is in its assertion that to be adequate to know and experience one has not only to “intend,” as the German phenomenologist Husserl would say, but to intend the object of knowledge passionately. The intending has to orient one’s whole being. This is to be in *bhau*, in affection for the Beloved’s awe and mystery. *Bhau* is not “fear” but the prevalence of loving attachment that the awe and immensity of the Beloved inspire. In Sri Rāg Bhagat Kabir says that “*bhau*” is caused by His pleasure (Ibid., 92). *Bhau* leads to impassioned Love, says Baba Farid in the Slokas :

Even if my blanket gets wet and it rains by the Will of Allah  
 I will go and meet the Beloved to keep my Love

(Ibid., 1309)

But the Baba says that the “Cup of Love” (*piram piala*) is His Blessing. Impassioned intending or Love makes possible the realization of the Beloved or the knowledge of the object of research, in the idiom of the Quantum.

A very distinct and useful thought that the Granth gives is that when the moment of knowledge or Gyan occurs, it is an experiential moment of festivity. In this context, Rāg Rāmkali Anand of Mahla 3 is a very significant creation. The Guru opens the Bāni with the following festive words :

Divine jouisaance has hapened oh mother  
 I have attained to the True Guru  
 I have attained to the True Guru in *sahaj*  
 the mind is struck by festivities.  
 The jewel like rāgas with their families  
 have arrived to sing the Sabda

(Ibid., 917)

What the Granth adds to contemporary knowledges is that the universe as an object of knowledge is to be accepted as transcending individual probes, its mystery is immense and it is sacred. Its constancy and order are awe-inspiring leading to a consciousness of aesthetics, a sacred and beautiful aesthesia. A sacred-aesthetic relationship with the dynamic universe in which the mind almost loses itself, will yield more enriching results.

By keeping the Karta Purakh-seeker relationship dependent on gift/*dāt*, the Granth does not let the relationship be positivistic, that is, bereft of the sacred and humanity. The constant, ordered, beautiful universe, inspiring aesthesia, for its probe needs a *nirmal* mind. And the minds of those cannot be *nirmal* “who drink the blood of human beings” (*Jo rat pivaih Nanaka so kyo nirmal cheet*).

To be in communion with Karta Purakh or the beautiful, mysterious universe one is not qualified as a sucker. It means that knowledge production, consciousness, and justice are interrelated. “Blood sucking” here should be taken as a metonymy for reduction or determinacy. Capitalism and socialism are not free from determinacy. In both capital determines whether it is proletarian or capitalistic. The final unfulfilled “messianic promise” of Marxism, of which Derrida talks, is to create a society in which the Other matters as the Other in his/her potential glory, without being determined. Long before, to our amazement the Bāni creators of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, in articulating Karta Purakh as non-determined and non-determining, making gifts according to his sovereign Will, had initiated a relationship in which calculation or determination did not exist. Karta Purakh does not respond to the seeker’s calculation for reward. In Rāg Mājh says : “He on His own calls to bless with Sabda” (Ibid., 118).

The non-determining Karta Purakh and His gift relationship with the seeker is also to suggest to re-organize the society of indeterminacy,

of cosmic spontaneity, *sahaj*. But to create a society in which justice, spontaneity and the divine may intersect and establish multilogue, a new intercommunicative language is needed. The language loaded with reductive content becomes insufficient. A “breakthrough” thought has to refashion the common expression-ensembles by attaching new signifieds. Both Heisenberg and Bohr have emphasized in their writings the importance of word-consciousness. Some contemporary feminists like Dale Spender, Sarah Mills, Janet Wolff have pointed out the specific efforts of woman writers to invent the female liberative sentence and semiotic system by puncturing the phallocentric sentence.

The authors of Sri Guru Granth Sahib have consciously re-fashioned language. In addition to creating the sign of Vismādic Karta Purakh by attaching many complementary signifieds, the authors have made the common language adequate to carry the content of the divine, eros, nature and the cosmicized feminine. Multiple creative energies flow in it unrestricted. At the same time it is multi-located, that is, mediated by many perspectives. Baramaha Tukhari of Mahla 1, and Bāramaha Mājh of Mahla 5 are supreme examples of this kind of language, that is spread all over the Granth. In Rāg Suhi of Mahla 1, the following lines or better *vāks* epitomise this transformational language :

Beloved friends have come to my home.

The True one has blessed the meeting.

The illumined saints have made this possible in *sahaj* leading to attainment of peace.

The One to whom the mind was attached has been realized

The meeting is ceaseless, the mind is swayed, the temple of home is beautified.

The sounds of five instruments have struck the tune of the Unstruck  
Beloved friends have come to my home.

(Ibid., 764)

The *Vāks* simultaneously carry the multi-content of the divine, the saintly collective, eros. The language here is trans—as well as inter-semiotic, it becomes transformational. It cuts through reduction and hegemonic one-dimensionality of the Brahmanical or Mughal kind. The language and *Vāk* of Sri Guru Granth Sahib are thus, transformational, apt for the society of gift relationship of *sahaj* and creative flows. In brief, in view of our recent concerns, Sri Guru Granth Sahib is our contemporary text offering lights that we still need.

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# BHAGAT BANI IN GURU GRANTH SAHIB

*Shashi Bala*

Guru Granth Sahib, as compiled by Guru Arjan Dev in 1604, incorporates the compositions of six Sikh Gurus, fifteen Bhagats or Saints of medieval period and panegyrics of fifteen Bhatts. The approach of the Holy Scripture is holistic and integrative with emphasis on the dynamic aspect of reality and pragmatic vision to socialise religion by envisaging the sovereign self-identity of man as well as the collective amelioration of social conditions. The present paper is an attempt to study the intimate relationship of the compositions of the Bhagats to the compositions of Gurus from the philosophical perspective.

## **(i) Introduction**

The Bhagats whose compositions are included in the Guru Granth Sahib represent nearly the four centuries of Indian thought from the middle of the twelfth to the middle of the sixteenth century A.D.<sup>1</sup> The chronological order of these Bhagats and their different regions are depicted by Pashaura Singh as follows : Sheikh Farid (Pakpattan, Punjab), Jaidev (Birbhum, Bengal), Trilochan (Sholapur, Maharashtra), Sadhna (Sindh), Beni (Tonk, Rajasthan), Ramanand (Paryag, U.P.), Kabir (Banaras, U.P.), Ravidas (Banaras, U.P.), Pipa (Gagraun, M.P.), Sain (Rewa, M.P.), Dhanna (Tonk), Bhikan (Lucknow U.P.), Parmanand (Sholapur, Maharashtra), Surdas (Oudh, U.P.).<sup>2</sup> These Bhagats were the product of different religious traditions and most of them came out of the lower strata of society. Sheikh Farid was a muslim, Kabir was a weaver, Jaidev, Trilochan, Surdas and Ramanand were brahmins, Pipa was a raja, Dhanna, a jat or cultivator, Namdev, a calico-printer, Sain, a barbar; Sadhna a butcher, Ravidas a cobbler and the caste of Bhikan and Beni is not known.

The criterion for selection of the compositions of Bhagats was nirguna religiosity and conformity to the basic tenets of Guru Granth Sahib. The total number of hymns of Bhagats as included in the Holy



Scripture are 349 besides the three long compositions of Kabir and 243 slokas of Kabir and 130 slokas of Sheikh Farid, (out of which some of the slokas are of Gurus). The arrangement of hymns in Guru Granth Sahib is not subject-wise but it is in accordance with the Rāgas. The total number of which is thirty-one and the Bhagat Bāni is composed in twenty-two Rāgas and is placed at the end of each Rāga section. The hymns, *ashtpadis*, *chhants* and *vars* of the Gurus come first in the order of succession and then the hymns of the Bhagats in the same format, followed by *sahskriti slokas*, *gatha*, *phunhe* and *chaubolas* of Guru Arjan and *salokas* of Kabir and Farid, *savaiyas*, *slokas* of Gurus, *mundavni* and *rāga-mala*. To preserve the identity of the compositions of the Bhagats, these have been denominated individually by their names such as Siri Rāga Kabir Ji ka, Siri Raga Trilochan ka, Siri Rāga Bani Bhagat Beni Ji ki and Rāga Asa Bani Bhagatan Ki : Kabir Jiu, Namdev Jiu, Ravidas Jiu. The title of the compositions of the Bhagats reveal a profound spirit of regard towards the bhagats. So it is a misconception to regard the compositions of bhagats as ‘at the lower end of this hierarchy of sanctity’ as is mentioned by Gurinder Singh Mann.<sup>3</sup>

## (ii) Attitude of Scholars towards Bhagat Bani

There are different versions in the early as well as in the later Sikh sources about the transmission, inclusion and status of the Bhagat Bani in the Guru Granth Sahib. In the early Sikh tradition, Sarup Das Bhalla's *Mahima Prakash* records that the bhagats approached to the fifth Guru and requested him to include their compositions in the Holy Scripture. This view presents difficulties due to chronological disorder. In the nineteenth century, the later Sikh sources, such as *Sikhan di Bhagatmala*, *Sri Gurbilas Patashahi VI*, *Suraj Parkash*, *Tvarikh Guru Khalsa* held the view that the bhagats were made to appear in spiritual form before Guru Arjan Dev. This prevalent view was disapproved by the twentieth century Singh Sabha Scholars who found close affinities between some of Guru Nanak's compositions and those of the Bhagats on the basis of internal evidence.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the divergent viewpoints are found among the Sikh scholars regarding the inclusion of Bhagat Bani in Guru Granth Sahib. Kesar Singh Chibbar in his *Bansavalinama* regards ‘the low-caste Bhagats as menial servants

(najar) of the Master'. Tara Singh Narotam in *Granth Sri Gurmat Nirnaya Sagar* claimed that Guru Arjan Dev himself has compiled the entire Bhagat Bani, keeping in mind the thought of each bhagat. In this way, he tried to maintain the affinity by attributing the whole Bhagat Bani to Guru Arjan Dev. Teja Singh Bhasaur, a protagonist of the radical wing of Singh Sabha initiated the negative approach and wanted to purify the Sikh tradition from all non-Sikh elements. As a reaction to this approach, the trend among the scholars changed and they tried to bring out close affinities between the compositions of Gurus and the compositions of Bhagats. Bhai Vir Singh stressed on the non-sectarian approach of the Sikh Gurus, the practical shape of which is evident in the inclusion of the compositions of the Bhagats, who belonged to different castes, different regions and also to different religious groups. Teja Singh and Ganda Singh held that the incorporation of Bhagat Bani in the Guru Granth Sahib reflects the cosmopolitan spirit of the holy scripture.<sup>5</sup>

### **(iii) Acknowledgement of Spiritual attainment of Bhagats by Gurus**

The compositions of the Bhagats have not only been incorporated by Guru Arjan Dev in the Holy Scripture, but their spiritual attainment is duly acknowledged by the Gurus in their own hymns. The attainment of the exalted state of enlightenment of Namdev and Kabir is recorded in Siri Raga by Guru Amar Das. Though Namdev was a calico-printer and Kabir, a weaver, yet they realized the Divine word through the perfect preceptor by eliminating their ego and realized the highest state, which cannot be effaced by anyone.<sup>6</sup> The divine recognition of Namdev, Jaidev, Trilochan, Kabir, Ravidas, Dhanna and Sain, is mentioned in Raga Bilawal by Guru Ram Das.<sup>7</sup> Again in Raga Maru, while stressing on the efficacy of Divine Name in the Kaliage, Guru Ram Das narrates how the afflictions of Namdev, Jaidev, Kabir, Trilochan and Ravidas were eliminated and they got redeemed by their true devotion to the Divine Name.<sup>8</sup>

Guru Arjan Dev in Raga Asa Bani Bhagat Dhanna ji ki, mentions the spiritual exaltation of Namdev, Kabir, Ravidas and Sain, who belonged to lower castes with little recognition in the mundane world, but they got spiritual elevation and recognition by their deep devotion to God, adoption of merits, detachment from worldliness and realization of divine presence

within. The spiritual enlightenment of these bhagats inspired Dhanna, a cultivator to engage in devotion, and in this way, he was blessed with divine revelation.<sup>9</sup> Here it is clear that the birth in low caste and meagre sources of life are no hindrance in the way of God and these are immaterial from the spiritual point of view. The elevated persons not only attain the heights of spirituality but they also become beaconlight for others. The inter-relation of Bhagats with Gurus as well as with other Bhagats is vividly explicit in the acknowledgement of spiritual status of bhagats in their respective hymns. Such as the blessing and spiritual awakening of Namdev and Jaidev is mentioned by Bhagat Kabir. (Kabir Gauri 36, Guru Granth Sahib 330; Kabir Bilawal 7, Guru Granth Sahib 856, Kabir Basant, 2, Guru Granth Sahib 1194)

Guru Arjan Dev has not only acknowledged the spiritual enlightenment of these bhagats and their recognition among the saints of God but also explicated the diverse ways through which these bhagats attained Divine Grace. As is stated in Raga Basant M.5. :

Dhanna served Him with child-like simplicity.  
 Trilochan by contact with the Master success obtained.  
 Beni by the Master was illumination granted.  
 My self ! Thou too be God's Servant. (5)  
 Jaidev his egoism discarded.  
 Sain the barber was by serving the Lord saved.  
 Nowhere was the mind of these devotees shaken.  
 My self! thou too by taking shelter with the Lord shalt be saved (6)  
 Such of the devotees as by the Lord were shown grace  
 were by Him saved—  
 Their merits and demerits He reckoned not.  
 Beholding such state is my mind in the Lord's service engaged.  
 (7)  
 Kabir with constant devotion on Him meditated.  
 Namdev with the Lord abided.  
 Ravidas too on the Incomparable Lord meditated.  
 Guru Nanak Dev is the very image of the Lord. (8)<sup>10</sup>

The various ways mentioned in the above stated hymn, such as simplicity of mind, meeting with the divine preceptor, elimination of ego, selfless service, constant meditation and firm devotion are consistent with the teachings of the Gurus. The last line of this hymn is translated in different ways by different scholars. As Prof. G.S. Talib translated it

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as, 'Guru Nanak Dev is the very image of the Lord.' Dr. Gopal Singh translated it as, 'So will I too dwell on Nanak, the Guru, who is the very manifestation of God.'<sup>11</sup> Prof. Sahib Singh translated it as, 'O Nanak, Guru is form (*rup*) of God.'<sup>12</sup> Pashaura Singh points out that, 'a subtle distinction between the unique status of Guru Nanak as embodiment of God and the bhagats as the devotees of God is made and concludes that 'the primacy of the status of the Guru is retained over the status of the bhagats in the Sikh scriptural tradition.' He also narrates the meaning of the terms bhagat and Guru to stress that the bhagat is 'seeker after truth and liberation' and the term Guru 'stands for the voice of Akal Purukh mystically uttered within the human heart, mind and soul.'<sup>13</sup>

However, some scholars on the basis of internal evidence about the distinction between the Guru and bhagat as is found in Guru Granth Sahib, tried to prove the supremacy of Guru to bhagat. There is no denying the fact that the significance of Guru or divine preceptor is highlighted in the Gurbani and Guru is defined as the manifestation of God Himself. The Bhagats, whose compositions have been incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib, emerged from the different phases of Bhakti movement, which originated in the South and spread to the other parts of India. This Bhakti Movement was a sort of religious revival, in which the utmost stress was laid on the Bhakti-marga. The common appellation 'bhagat' used for the adherents of this Bhakti Movement indicates the stress on the path of devotion and it does not mean as seeker after truth or mere devotee of God, because the spiritual attainment of these bhagats is duly acknowledged by the Gurus in their own hymns. Nonetheless, this fact of keeping the status of Gurus higher than the bhagats seems not the intention of the compiler and this cosmopolitan spirit is more explicit, when Guru Gobind Singh conferred the status of Guru on Guru Granth Sahib, which incorporates the compositions of Bhagats also. Similarly, no such difference is found in the Sikh liturgical practices such as *vak laina* and recitation of Gurbani in musical measures in the holy congregation.

#### (iv) Doctrinal Aspect of the hymns of Gurus and Bhagats :

Guru Granth Sahib enunciates the monotheistic aspect of ultimate reality i.e. transcendent and immanent; unmanifest and manifest; Sri Satguru Jagjit Singh Ji eLibrary NamdhariElibrary@gmail.com

impersonal and personal; Nirguna and Sarguna. It repudiates the doctrine of incarnation and idol worship and lays stress on inward religiosity rather than outward formalism and ritualism. The compositions of the bhagats, included in the Guru Granth Sahib, are in consonance with the basic tenets of the Guru Granth Sahib. Though these bhagats belonged to different regions with diverse religious and cultural background, yet there is similarity in their style of writing. They used the vernacular language and expressed their ideas through similes, idioms and metaphors. There is doctrinal agreement on themes such as God, soul, human life, world, Nam, Guru union with God, human equality, etc. The complete identity of the compositions of Gurus and those of Bhagats, is stated in the Encyclopaedia of Sikhism as :

These two streams mingle together completely and no distinctions are ever made among the writings emanating from them. They all, the writings of the Gurus as well as those of the Bhagats, constitute one single text. On any point of precept and doctrine, both will have equal validity. Both enjoy equal esteem and reverence. In fact, the notion of two does not exist. Both signal one single metaphysical truth.<sup>14</sup>

Though the main doctrinal themes are in conformity with the basic spirit of Guru Granth Sahib, yet the reflections of their religious background are maintained in the Holy Scripture. For instance, Jaidev's use of Vaishnava names of God such as Hari, Chakardhar, Govinda and Sheikh Farid's adherence to Shariat' day of judgement, fear of *dozak*, *satan*, etc. reveal their respective religious background.

#### **(v) Reflections of Gurus on Bhagat Bani**

An intimate relationship with Bhagat Bani is established in three ways in the Holy Scripture, Guru Granth Sahib. First, in the reflections of the Gurus on the compositions of the Bhagats as is seen in the slokas of Kabir and Sheikh Farid. The total number of Kabir's slokas is 243, out of which 237 slokas are of Kabir, 1 slok is of Guru Amar Das and 5 slokas are of Guru Arjan Dev. In a similar way, the total number of Sheikh Farid's slokas is 130 out of which 112 slokas are of Sheikh Farid and 18 slokas are of Gurus (4 slokas of Guru Nanak, 5 slokas of Guru Amar Das, 1 slok of Guru Ram Das and 8 slokas of Guru Arjan Dev). Second, in the insertion of slokas of the Bhagats in the compositions of the Gurus as is evident in Gujari-ki-var (M3, Guru Granth Sahib, 509-

10) Var in Bihagara (M.4. Guru Granth Sahib, 555) and in the Var of Ramkali (M.3. Guru Granth Sahib, 947-48). Third, in replacing Guru Arjan Dev's hymns alongwith the compositions of the Bhagats and initiating a dialogue with these Bhagats. This type of inter-dialogue takes place in the compositions of Kabir, Farid, Dhanna and Surdas. Though the insertion of Guru Arjan Dev's hymns in the compositions of the Bhagats is a sort of reflection but it bears the signature of the Bhagat who is commented upon.

The main themes which emerge in the reflections of the Gurus relate not to the conceptual aspect but to the basic attitude towards life and world, time of prayer, age for worship, effect of company, moral purification, renunciation, human efforts and divine grace, dying to live and the integration of action and contemplation. A minute analysis of the responses of the Gurus towards verses of the Bhagats makes this point more clear.

While comparing the door of salvation with the width of the tenth part of sesame seed and the inflated mind to an elephant, Kabir expresses the positive attitude to pass through it by meeting with the Guru. Guru Amar Das endorsed this view of Kabir and elaborates it by holding ego as the cause of mind's rigidity and provides a spiritual prescription of meeting with the Guru who eliminates ego and fills the mind with divine light enabling the soul to get release and to enjoy the state of equanimity.<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, the theme of dying to self or 'living dead' is hinted at by Kabir which is further explicated by Guru Amar Das who suggests that it could be possible by Guru's grace, abandoning self-centeredness and disciplining the mind through God's fear and curing all maladies through divine love.<sup>16</sup> At another place, Kabir laments that no one knows how to die? and if anyone knows it, he may not die again. Guru Amar Das's response is a sort of recommendation that dying to self takes place in constant remembrance of God through Guru's grace and such death means eternal living.<sup>17</sup>

In another verse, Kabir stresses on personal efforts to obtain divine favour and resents his incapability to attain divine favour despite of his hard penances. He employs the analogy of henna and says, 'my effort was like the henna's' but he is contradicted by Guru Amar Das who says, 'Be thou like the henna, but wait (patiently) for the Grace of

God.' Here the emphasis is on the Divine Will in accordance with which one can attain Divine love. The need is to surrender with spirit of equanimity.<sup>18</sup> Again when Kabir says, 'Why should we propose and make schemes when our efforts prove futile before God's schemes', Guru Amardas responds that God Himself puts care in man and Himself makes man free of care.<sup>19</sup> The main point is that God Himself is doer of all actions and He Himself inspires man to do. Man must transcend from his narrow self-centeredness to gain divine favour.

This theme of divine grace is also stressed by Guru Nanak in commenting on Sheikh Farid's verse. Sheikh Farid states that morning time is best time for prayer and those who manage to awake in the morning for prayer, are blessed by God. Guru Nanak's comment reveals that the blessing of God, cannot be claimed as a matter of right, through personal efforts but it comes on its own accord or spontaneously, If God Wills, He may bless some shaking them out of their slumber.<sup>20</sup> The early morning as the time for prayer is also stated in Slok 107 where Farid opines that those who don't arise in the early morning are like dead while living. Guru Arjan Dev explains the merit of early morning prayer in the following four verses (Slok 108 to Slok 111) and comments in the last Slok as :

Farid ! our hearts in the world are dyed that is worthless;  
Hard is the way of life of God's devotees,  
That by supreme good fortunate may be attained.<sup>21</sup>

Here it is clearly stated that awaking early morning is not sufficient, if one's mind remains indulged in worldly things. But this type of detachment amid worldly living is possible only through divine grace.

In Guru Granth Sahib, the divine grace is not bound within the limits of time and space. Sheikh Farid in Slok 12, insists on the specific time of man's life i.e. period of young age, for praying to God. He observes that those who do not love God in youth, rarely does so in old age. In Slok 13, Guru Amar Das responds to the above view of Farid by stressing on the point of divine grace. The period of youth and of old age are immaterial for worshipping God, because the devotion to God comes not by man's own personal efforts or by mere wish but this divine love is conferred on man due to divine grace.<sup>22</sup>

Guru Granth Sahib repudiates the rigorous penances and ascetic practices and stresses on the balanced way of life which means moderate

living in spirit of detachment. Sheikh Farid's Sloks. at certain places, give reflection of his adherence to ascetic practices. As in Slok 119, Sheikh Farid expresses his intense desire to meet God and to fulfil this desire, he is ready to undergo through strenuous penances like burning his body in furnace and burning his bones as fuel or walking on his head if his feet tire. This view is commented upon by Guru Nanak Dev in Slok 120, by stating that one need not torture the poor limbs of the body by these hard penances, because the need is to visualise God within one's own self. This viewpoint is further elaborated by Guru Ram Das in Slok 121 which holds that God resides within but is inaccessible and can be approached or recognised through the divine preceptor.<sup>23</sup>

Prof. Sahib Singh observes that if we relate Slok 119 with Slok 125, then the position of Sheikh Farid becomes apparent.<sup>24</sup> Sheikh Farid compares the human body, caught among waves of desire, with the solitary bird sitting on the edge of a lake with numerous snares around it and holds that it can be saved by divine grace. He asks what words to utter, what qualities to acquire, what rich jewels of speech to master, what wears to adopt to win the Divine love? In the next four Slokas (Slokas 127-130), the stress is given on the cultivation of moral virtues. The essential prerequisite is humility, forgiveness and sweet speech<sup>25</sup>. The other qualities to be adopted are innocence even when wise, powerless even though blessed with power, sharing with others even though slander store, speaking no harsh words and breaking no heart.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, in Slok 103, Sheikh Farid's view of 'tearing of silken robes' and assuming coarse woollen wear' gives an indication to the life of renunciation, which is corrected in Slok 104 by Guru Amar Das who emphasised on the inner purity as the supreme virtue to meet God, which can be attained by living a life of householder. This point of inner purity is further elaborated by Guru Arjan Dev in Slok 105 which suggests the way to purity by shedding pride of beauty, riches and worldly greatness.<sup>27</sup>

This theme of inner purity amid the normal course of living is stressed elsewhere, where Sheikh Farid in Slok 51 holds that the devotees of God being imbued with divine love, lose all blood due to hard penance and even if their body is cut, no drop of blood will be seen. This view is contradicted and clarified by Guru Amar Das in Slok 52, by pointing out



that human body cannot exist without blood. Those who are imbued with God's love are devoid of the blood of greed because the impurities of foul thinking are destroyed by God's fear in a similar way as the impurity of metals is purified by fire.<sup>28</sup>

However, the response of Gurus to the Bhagat Bani aimed at stressing the basic precepts of Guru Granth Sahib viz., *nam japna*, *kirat karna* and *vand chhakana*. This is possible only by living detached amidst worldly life. Wherever Sheikh Farid presents a gloomy view of life that the world is gripped by sufferings. Guru Arjan Dev modifies it by stressing on the delightful aspect of life, which can be visualised and attained, if one loves God. Again the emphasis is on *nam-simarn* as well as performance of routine duties. The inter-dialogue of bhagats makes this theme more explicit. In Kabir's hymns, it appears sometimes that Kabir left his profession of weaving, as his mother laments and Kabir's reply that 'so long as I pass the thread through the shuttle, so long do I forget my loved Lord, Who is refuge of mine and my children.'<sup>29</sup> Trilochan's reply to Bhagat Namdev in Guru Arjan Dev's verse indicates 'with the tongue utter the Name of the Lord and work with hands and feet but cherish thy God, detached in heart.'<sup>30</sup>

To conclude, we can say that the underlying spirit of these reflections of the Gurus on the compositions of the Bhagats is to elucidate, to expatiate, to comment and to contradict the point in order to bring these compositions in conformity to the basic spirit of Guru Granth Sahib which enunciates the monotheistic aspect of the ultimate reality and vehemently condemns the outward formalism to emphasize on the inward religiosity. However, the inclusion of the compositions of the Bhagats, the acknowledgement of their spiritual status and the preservation of their individual identity provide an ecumenical outlook to the Holy Scripture Guru Granth Sahib and is also indicative of its catholic and cosmopolitan spirit.

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3. Gurinder Singh Mann, *The Making of Sikh Scripture*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2001, pp. 117-18.

He observes :

‘The hymns of Guru Nanak result directly from the original revelation and are taken to constitute the pinnacle of sacred Sikh Literature; the next stage belongs to hymns created by the Sikh Gurus who carried the light of Guru Nanak; at the third stage came the hymns by the Sikhs who were initiated into sainthood by the Gurus themselves and the hymns of Bhagats, are at the lower end of this hierarchy of sanctity.’

4. Pashaura Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-12.
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6. Guru Granth Sahib, p. 67.
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22. *Ibid.*, p. 1378.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 1384.
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29. *Ibid.*, p. 524.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 1375.

## ETHICAL CONCERNS OF GURU GRANTH SAHIB

*Jaswinder Kaur Dhillon*

There is no human society that does not have well-established codes or rules of conduct; both individual as well as socio-political. There are various ethical theories or moral philosophies to explain the principles by which men ought to live. Men continually judge their own conduct as well as of their fellow beings. In this continued moral exercise some acts are approved and others are rejected. The good traits of character are called virtues and the bad traits are called vices. Ethics is a study of human values, i.e. concepts about good and bad. It attempts to stimulate the moral sense to discover the values of life and inspire men to join in the quest for these values.

Ethics has always been viewed as the cradle of good and happy life by all religions. Religion without moral insight may become narrow and divisive and may reinforce the prejudices and hatred between men. Ethical religion tends to unite men and stimulate respect for human personality, regardless of the barriers of tribe, class, nationality or race. Religion has always stimulated moral standards and moral ideals that constitute an ethical, socio-political structure. The Guru Granth Sahib, the scripture of the Sikhs contains the ethical teachings of their Gurus and more than thirty Hindu and Muslim sages, intertwined with metaphysical and religious declarations. It is a great source of inspiration for religious aspirations and universal brotherhood. It is a comprehensive guide for ethico-religious living as it shows the path for all round wholesome life. No wonder Guruship was bestowed upon it by the last living Guru of the Sikhs.

Propounding that since God had created everything out of Himself and also abides Himself in everything, man and his soul being a part of God himself, Gurbani enshrined in Guru Granth Sahib, exhorts man to realise the truth by spiritual knowledge imparted by a true Guru, and try

to become God like. In the manner of Vedanta, Sikhism too preaches that the ideal goal of human life is the re-mergence of the human soul back into God, the Supreme Soul, from which it had parted at God's pleasure, thus ending the woeful duality with the Creator. Man could realise this fact only through spiritual knowledge imparted by a true Guru and strive to achieve re-mergence with God, which would get him Mukti by ending his rebirths in numerous types of lives created by God. This re-mergence could be won by man by winning the grace of God only by following the path of ethical living and worship of God (Bhakti) shown by the true Guru.

Virtues or *sadguns* are the essentials of ethical living. Virtues are considered significant since ages. Plato had recognised wisdom, courage, temperance and justice as the chief virtues. Jain philosophy used the terms of *punya* (charity) and *dhanna* (morality) for virtues. In Nyaya school of thought, the term *shubhya* (goodness) is employed. In Guru Granth Sahib, such great importance is accorded to the virtues that it is held that Bhakti is impossible without them.<sup>1</sup> The person who practices ethical living is called a *sachiar* and is equated with *gurmukh* or even God. In the phrase 'ਨਾਨਕ ਏਵੈ ਜਾਣੀਐ ਸਭੁ ਆਪੇ ਸਚਿਆਰੁ'<sup>2</sup> the word *sachiar* is used for God, while in the phrase 'ਕਿਵ ਸਚਿਆਰਾ ਹੋਈਐ ਕਿਵ ਕੂੜੈ ਤੁਟੈ ਪਾਲਿ'<sup>3</sup> the word *sachiar* is used for *gurmukh*. To the question in the latter phrase, the answer given in the Gurbani is that man can become *sachiar* only by abiding by the *hukam* of God, or in other words following the path shown by God. And, of course, the path shown by God is the path of virtues or ethical living.

Regarding ethics or ethical living, the central concept of the Gurbani is that man reaps the fruit of his deeds (Karma).<sup>4</sup> It is held that good deeds earn good fortunes, while base deeds beget woes and worries.<sup>5</sup> In the court of the Almighty everybody is to be accounted for his deeds.<sup>6</sup> Souls adjudged for good deeds gain glory and Grace of God.<sup>7</sup> Souls attain closeness with, or are repulsed away from, the Supreme Soul only according to the goodness or baseness of their deeds.<sup>8</sup> One who commits sin has to pay for them,<sup>9</sup> nobody can escape the retribution for evil deeds.<sup>10</sup> This is the basis of the Karma doctrine of Sikhism, and Hinduism also, that the type of birth (whether in human or other species of life) and type of life (happy and prosperous, or woeful) is pre-ordained

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according to the deeds of the jiva in previous births. This pre-determination is also known as Karma, in another of its meaning denoting fate or *bhag*, which are pre-determined according to one's deeds, that is, Karma in its other meaning.

In Guru Granth Sahib, the term Karma is also used in its Persian meaning of *mehar*, or the Grace of God. Thus the term Karma is used in Guru Granth Sahib in three distinct meanings : fate, moral deeds and Divine Grace. It is asserted that fate is the fruit of ones deeds and while the jiva wanders indefinitely in an unbroken cycle of re-births in various species of life according to the intensity of its bad deeds,<sup>11</sup> birth into human life is the fruit of exceptionally good deeds in previous lives.<sup>12</sup> Human disposition is also moulded by the deeds of the previous births,<sup>13</sup> according to which one commits good or bad deeds in ones present life, which in turn determines whether one would deserve liberation or remain stuck in the continued cycle of birth and rebirths. Human life is also considered a rare opportunity for the soul to ameliorate the action and effect of all the previous misdeeds through ethical deeds and Bhakti to improve its fate and if possible attain Mukti from transmigration by attaining the grace of God.

The Karma doctrine of Guru Granth Sahib does not hold, like the Hindu doctrine, that the fate determined by bad deeds of the previous births is inviolable and cannot be improved, owing to which man has to totally surrender himself to his fate, which had often encouraged pessimism and *sannyas* in traditional Hinduism. The philosophy of Guru Granth Sahib accepts God to be just and benevolent, and holds that although all the worldly affairs and systems are run under the control of God's *hukam* or Divine-will, yet His writ which determines man's fate is ruled by man's deeds, and therefore, man can have his fate improved through good deeds.<sup>14</sup> Mukti, the premier ideal of human life, can only be achieved by winning the grace of God, which in turn can be won through ethical deeds, yet even ethicality is practised by only such persons who are blessed by God's Grace.<sup>15</sup> In Var Sarang of Guru Granth Sahib, it is clearly held that Mukti can be attained only with God's grace and its best means, Bhakti (worship of God), which can grow only from disposition for ethicality and is practised only by people of good fortunes.<sup>16</sup> Since good fortune or good fate is gained by good

deeds, ethical living is essential to win God's grace and Mukti.

Gurbani disparages the show off of pseudo-ethicality as futile. "Those claiming to be charitable, give away charity out of earnings of sins, misguided by their priestly mentors who frequent their homes and impart false religious instructions."<sup>17</sup> On the other hand what Gurbani extols is, "In amiability and humility lies the essence of merit and virtue."<sup>18</sup> Commenting sadly that "Morality and decency have just vanished,"<sup>19</sup> most of the preaching of Guru Granth Sahib is addressed to instilling highest morals amongst the devotees by asserting, "Your dispensation (before God) is according to your good or bad deeds."<sup>20</sup> Describing the importance of morality it is propounded that although, "Truth is the highest, but higher still is truthful living."<sup>21</sup> The gospel of Guru Granth Sahib contains extensive views regarding the "truthful living" or ethical living that is manifested in the spheres of personal, social, political and religious morality, ethics and virtuosity.

In the sphere of personal ethics, teachings of Gurbani emphasize ethical living and conduct above everything and lay great stress on man and his improvement. Man is required to transform his narrow egoistic perspective to realize the ideal self. Self-realization is the basis for morality according to the authors of the Bani (hymns) preserved in Guru Granth Sahib. The importance of human virtues (*gunas*) like truthfulness, honesty, chastity, humility, compassion, love, patience, contentment, pity, forgiveness, tolerance and temperance, is emphasized by all the contributors. They recognize God as the source of all the virtues. They hold that as many are the vices so many are the chains around one's neck, and declare that devotion without virtue is impossible. Even the knowledge that does not mould man ethically is futile. Only he who inculcates virtues can be considered learned. Ethicality is pre-requisite for attaining spirituality. Good deeds (*shubh karam*) are the essence of ideal life.

Lust (*kam*), anger (*krodh*), greed (*lobh*), attachment (*moh*) and vanity (*ahankar*) are the bane of harmony in a society. Man's ego (*haumai*) is the root-cause of all these vices. Guru Granth Sahib immortalises Guru Arjan's words :

Lust, wrath, intoxication with self and envy—  
All these in our gamble we lost.

Truth, contentment, compassion and righteousness—  
 To all these in our home we accorded entry.  
 Annulled is burden of birth and death,  
 As in holy company is the mind purified;  
 Thus the master, perfectly endowed  
 In an instant has saved us.  
 Now does the self reckon itself dust of feet of all;  
 All to it now appear cherished friends.  
 The Lord's vision is beheld pervading all;  
 Keeping in mind all creation, bestowing boons.<sup>22</sup>

Regarding worldly pursuits of wealth and position, Guru Granth Sahib has interesting way of condemning it : “Royal authority, estates, beauty of youth, grand mansions, passion of beautiful females, great wealth, elephants, steeds, jewels costing millions—none of these will be of any use at the time of reckoning at the Divine portal in the hereafter. Proud men shall depart, leaving all these behind.”<sup>23</sup> “The wealth man garners amidst curses of the victims does not remain loyal to him nor it lasts forever. It makes the man selfish and vain for which reasons God forsakes him and even his high caste and position serves no purpose.”<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, “those who efface their vanity and pride and become humble remain happy, while the very haughty are consumed by their own pride.”<sup>25</sup> “Whoever reckon themselves lowest of all, are considered supreme. One whose mind is humble, and who considers himself as the dust of feet of all, sees vision of the Divine Reality in all human beings.”<sup>26</sup> “Such a person does not contemplate evil of others, and therefore, no suffering touches him.”<sup>27</sup> Thus according to Gurbani a person whose egotism is effaced in holy company becomes pre-eminent among his peers.

As for social ethics, it is not much different from the personal ethics, because person is the basis of the society. For example the vices of bribery, injustice, inequality, lying, stealing, slandering, jealousy, violence, bickering, dishonesty, etc. do not just concern with “one’s own person but also with others, and therefore, are social too. Besides condemning these social vices, Guru Granth Sahib also condemns the social vices of casteism, untouchability, social derogation of women and Sannyas, that is, asceticism. Service (*sewa*)<sup>28</sup> of humanity and love,<sup>29</sup> compassion,<sup>30</sup> equality<sup>31</sup> and justice<sup>32</sup> for all are considered the

highest social virtues. To counter the anti-social tendency of Sannayas in the Hindu society which was bringing much derogation and all around weakness in the Indian society. Gurbani emphasises that achieving Mukti is possible by practicing Bhakti even while living and functioning ethically amongst ones family and friends discharging ones familial and social duties.<sup>33</sup>

Gurbani asserts that, "Even though thieves, fornicators, harlots and procurers thrive and have great time and forsake their religions and prefer Satan's way, yet their evil will breeds evil just as a donkey will still roll in dust howsoever may he be cleaned and groomed."<sup>34</sup> "Selfish and greedy people who act like wild dogs thriving on carrion, bark out falsehoods, and shun righteous thinking, have no honour in life nor would they get it in the after life."<sup>35</sup> Adultery, begging and asceticism are also severely criticized. Equality, liberty and justice are the hallmarks of social ethics of Guru Granth Sahib.

Regarding the social derogation of women, which had reached great heights in the Indian society under the overbearing influence of Islamic culture, Guru Granth Sahib does not accept the thesis of Manu and Islam that woman is the source of all evil. In Asa-ki-Var it is said that man takes birth from a woman, marries a woman and then expands his progeny through a woman. Man expands the circle of his relatives through women and through women he begets his successors. Man marries another woman when his wife dies, and woman is the basis of man's family. Kings, heroes, gurus, saints, deities, are all born of women, then why should man condemn women as a class. Only such people are honoured in God's court that respect women.<sup>36</sup> Gurbani goes to the extent of honouring the womanhood by calling a divine-devoted soul as the female-spouse of the Supreme Soul, instances of which can be seen spread all over the Sikh scripture.

Casteism and untouchability are the other social evils of the Indian society that Guru Granth Sahib seeks to rectify. The Sikh creed had given a death-blow to these social evils by according people of all castes, creeds, classes and sexes equal rights to visit and pray in its shrines (Gurdwaras), and to join its community and religious congregations (*sangats*) and community meals (*langar*). It is the hallmark of equality for all humankind. The essence of Gurbani is that all humankind is the



offspring of only one God, who also abides in them all, for which reason all human beings are equal.<sup>37</sup> It is further held that human beings enjoy good fortunes or suffer woes only according to God's *hukam* determined by their good or bad deed (Karma).<sup>38</sup> God is the judge, and his *hukam* is based only on the quality, of one's Karmas and not one's caste, creed or class.<sup>39</sup> Thus one must not feel proud of ones high caste or high office or great riches, because these are of no help in the court of God where every soul will be judged by his deeds only. Therefore, humans too should judge other humans only from their deeds and not on the basis of their class, creed or caste. "ਜਾਣਹੁ ਜੋਤਿ ਨ ਪੂਛਹੁ ਜਾਤੀ ਆਗੈ ਜਾਤਿ ਨ ਹੋ." (GGS, p. 349)

Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism shows the path in the Gurbani, "What have I to do with the high caste people? You may always find me amongst the meanest, the lowest of the low castes."<sup>41</sup> Bhai Gurdas had testified in his *Vars*, "Guru Nanak had abolished the differences between the four castes."<sup>42</sup> Gurbani propounds, "Vain is the pride of caste and vain the pride of high station, because only the Lord alone gives the real eminence to all."<sup>43</sup> "Caste by birth carries no significance as it is fixed by the Supreme Being. A man's caste and class are determined by the deeds he performs."<sup>44</sup> "In God's kingdom all are comrades, and all alike consider Him as their friend and benefactor."<sup>45</sup> And Guru Nanak promises, "He who serves the high caste people deserves all praise; but, for the person who goes into the humbler castes for service, I would make shoes of my own skin."<sup>46</sup>

In the field of political ethics, Gurbani enshrined in Guru Granth Sahib not only carries very strong views regarding the low morality of the contemporary rulers and their functionaries but also enumerates many virtues a good ruler should emulate. We can see from many references in the Gurbani that most foreign rulers and their officials were totally unconcerned about the welfare of the people, being despotic, cruel, corrupt and unjust.<sup>47</sup> Describing the tyranny of the ruling class, Gurbani laments, "Rulers have become beasts of prey and their officers hounds. They do not allow the people to rest in peace. Their subordinates bleed the people, and like dogs prey on the blood and marrow of the poor. They forget that at the time of judgement they will be disgraced and punished."<sup>48</sup> "Nobody takes pity on the suffering of others. Nobody

resists from receiving graft. Rulers do not administer justice unless their palms are greased. You cannot persuade anybody just by invoking God's name."<sup>49</sup> Kazis would make show of religiosity but would not impart justice without bribery and Pandits were fleecing the miserable and friendless people in the name of religion.

Gurbani postulates that an ideal state does not become power-intoxicated, but is rather God-fearing and affords protection to its subjects and their religion. It reminds the rulers that despite their high offices, official glory, and authoritative dominance over their subjects, they will go to the God's court like everyone else and shall be judged like everyone else, only on the basis of goodness or baseness of their deeds.<sup>50</sup> Those in high offices must also remember that their offices and glory is never long-lasting and must one day come to an end, for which reason, they must remember the fate of immoral rulers bereft of their offices.<sup>51</sup> Only by practicing virtuosity can rulers ensure continuing in their offices.<sup>52</sup>

Guru Granth Sahib asserts that only a virtuous ruler would have a long tenure. Such a ruler would not be self-willed and headstrong, but would rule by consensus. Gurbani commends the Panchayati Raj system for a good ruler. Panchayati Raj system, so prevalent in Indian polity since ages and the oldest example of democracy practised in the world, has the basis in virtuosity, equality, justice, tolerance and universal brotherhood, the essence of Gurbani.<sup>53</sup> It is the duty of the rulers to practice and protect virtuosity.<sup>54</sup> People respect and love the rulers who rule by winning the hearts of the people rather on the strength of power and authority, "ਮਨਿ ਜੀਤੈ ਜਗੁ ਜੀਤੁ."<sup>55</sup> A person whom the people do not love or respect has no right to be the ruler, "ਕਿਆ ਸੁਲਤਾਨੁ ਸਲਾਮ ਵਿਹੁਣਾ."<sup>56</sup> A despotic and inhuman ruler ultimately suffers brutal fate at the hands of the same people whom he humiliates and harms.<sup>57</sup> Freedom,<sup>58</sup> equality<sup>59</sup> and justice<sup>60</sup> are considered as the most important features of an ethical political system.

As for religious ethics it, understandably, finds the maximum attention in Guru Granth Sahib. Gurbani boldly describes the socio-religious degeneration of the times of the Gurus. Similar degeneration in the Hindu and Muslim societies is picturesquely described by the third Guru Amardas in his Bani preserved in Guru Granth Sahib, "When a Sri Satguru Jagjit Singh Ji eLibrary

Hindu comes to join the Hindu fold, they recite mantras and put the cotton thread round his neck ceremoniously. But once the investiture is over, and he commits evil deeds, of what avail would be his washings and ablutions? Similarly, when a Muslim praises his own creed without believing in the great Prophet, how will he find any place in paradise? Very few follow the path indicated by Him. None will enter paradise without good deeds.... People forget that only those who remember God in this world will be recognised by Him in the hereafter. For the rest, all boast of being a Hindu or Muslim is in vain. All should remember that all have to render account at His door, and without righteous deeds none will get salvation.<sup>61</sup>

The religious ethics of Guru Granth Sahib requires the religious to be true and faithful to the tenets of their respective faiths, and condemns blind and fanatic emphasis on formalism and ritualism of all kinds.<sup>62</sup> The priests are admonished not to exploit ignorant people in the name of religion but to spread the true message of their respective creeds by setting worthy examples.<sup>63</sup> The ideal religion, according to Gurbani, is the one that relies more on ethical conduct than on theoretical truth and helps establish a society and state grounded in ethics.<sup>64</sup>

Gurbani roundly condemns religious formalism and appearances because these are employed by the religious charlatans to swindle the innocent devotees. It is asserted that practicing religion without understanding is nothing less than frittering away your valuable life.<sup>65</sup> Any type of religious practices besides worshiping, remembering, reciting or singing the name or praise of God is just contemptible.<sup>66</sup> Practising blind formalism cannot remove superstitions and ignorance.<sup>67</sup> Bare formalism and ritualism cannot help one realise God and Mukti.<sup>68</sup>

The nature of the ethics of Guru Granth Sahib is altruistic and all encompassing, covering all the aspects of human life, personal, social, political and religious. In short, it believes that an ethical man, society, state or religion should consider all humanity a single united human brotherhood, being the children of the same God, and should abhor all discrimination on the basis of creed, caste, class or sex. None should be proud of his class, creed or caste, because before God these qualities carry no meaning and God dispenses happiness, prosperity, Mukti or release from transmigration on the basis of one's deeds only. And exploiting religious charlatans, and repressive rulers and bureaucrats

would meet the end deserved by their sinful deeds. Only ethical life will deserve the grace of God, and inculcating the disposition of Bhakti, it will open the doors to Mukti for the human soul.

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2. Guru Granth Sahib, p. 2.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
4. ਮਤੁ ਕੋ ਜਾਣੈ ਜਾਇ ਅਗੈ ਪਾਇਸੀ ॥  
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5. ਉਤਮ ਸੇ ਦਰਿ ਉਤਮ ਕਹੀਅਹਿ ਨੀਚ ਕਰਮ ਬਹਿ ਰੋਇ ॥ —Guru Granth Sahib, p. 15.
6. Guru Granth Sahib, p. 473.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
8. ਚੰਗਿਆਈਆ ਬੁਰਿਆਈਆ ਵਾਚੈ ਧਰਮੁ ਹਦੂਰਿ ॥  
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9. Guru Granth Sahib, p. 138.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 460.
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17. Guru Granth Sahib, p. 961.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 470.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 1242.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 470-71.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 379.
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 278.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 266.
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28. *Ibid.*, pp. 286, 306, 571 etc.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 702, 1180 etc.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 136, 322 etc.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 473, 1240, 1282, 1330, etc.
32. *Ibid.*, pp. 350, 470-71, 1240, etc.

33. *Ibid.*, pp. 419, 661, 1012, etc.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 790.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 1242.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 473.
37. ਗਰਭ ਵਾਸ ਮਹਿ ਕੁਲੁ ਨਹੀ ਜਾਤੀ ॥  
ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਬਿੰਦੁ ਤੇ ਸਭ ਉਤਪਾਤੀ ॥ —Guru Granth Sahib, p. 324.
38. Guru Granth Sahib, pp. 1330, 1349, etc.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 143.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 349.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
42. Bhai Gurdas, *Var* 1 : 23.
43. Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1330.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 1330.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 1256.
47. Detailed accounts can be seen in Asa-ki-Var, and Malar-di-Var and most of the Gurbani.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 1288.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 350.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 992.
51. *Ibid.*, pp. 141, 936, 1257, etc.
52. ਰਾਜਾ ਤਖਤਿ ਟਿਕੈ ਗੁਣੀ ਭੈ ਪੰਚਾਇਣ ਰਤੁ ॥ —Guru Granth Sahib, p. 992.
53. Guru Granth Sahib, pp. 83, 663, etc.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 1240.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 354.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 902.
58. *Ibid.*, pp. 145, 877, 1380, etc.
59. *Ibid.*, pp. 1188, 1282, 1330, etc.
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65. Guru Granth Sahib, pp. 33, 641-42, 890, etc.
66. *Ibid.*, pp. 162, 2116, 635, etc.
67. *Ibid.*, pp. 114, 676, 1423, etc.
68. *Ibid.*, pp. 495, 747, 1351, etc.

## RAAG PARBANDH OF SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB

*Gurnam Singh*

The Sikh Gurus have showered their grace upon mankind with the divine message in the form of Gurbani. They employed *Shabd Kirtan* as a communicational device for expressing the divine message termed as *Kasam Ki Bani*.<sup>1</sup> It reflects all-pervasiveness of music in the form of Naad Brahm in the Indian religious tradition and alludes to inseparable relationship of sacred poetry and music. In this way the multi-faceted nature of Bani manifested in a harmonious way through *Shabd* and *Kirtan*. The Gurus brought into play music in its original and unique form. Different musicological elements and devices have been applied for *Shabd Kirtan* in an exclusive and definitive manner for *Sangeet Parbandh* of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. This tradition of *Shabd Kirtan* and *Sangeet Parbandh* of Sri Guru Granth Sahib is known as *Gurmat Sangeet*.

Musicological classification dominates the compilation of Sri Guru Granth Sahib in 31 main Raagas and different Raaga forms. From this earlier tradition of *Shabad Kirtan* in Sikhism, has emanated different Raaga-based *kirtan chaukis*, including *taksal prampra* and different schools of Gurmat Sangeet. The old and continuing tradition of *Raagis* and *Rabaabis* constitute a precious heritage of this great musical tradition.

Singing of Gurbani under prescribed *Raagas*, peculiar singing styles and definitive musical signs is must for any *Kirtankaar* as it is for the scholars of Gurubani to understand the exact perspective of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. These musical elements and devices have been used as a key for the compilation of the holy scripture which have their own structural and functional significance. All these elements can be described in the following manner :

The central idea of any composition of *Bani* lies in the couplets referred to as *Rahau*. *Rahau* is taken as *sathai* in *Shabad Kirtan* and

the tradition necessitates to sing it repeatedly after every *antra* which is indicated by different digits/*anks*. The lines containing digits viz. 1,2,3,4 as *ank* portray different illustrations, reasonings, examples facilitating a deep understanding of *Gurbani*. And these lines have to be sung as *antras* after *rahau* one by one. The names of different singing styles as the title of *Bani*'s compositions, different tunes of *vaars*, *ghar*, *Jaatee*, and other symbols like *sudhang* have their own musicological meaning and relevance.

In Gurubani, the Raagas enjoying everlasting immortal power and unique fragrance have made indelible impact on the human mind by getting familiar to new dimensions of the Divine message.<sup>2</sup> While defining the purpose of reciting these Raagas keeping in view the spiritual motive of *Gurbani*, Sikh Gurus have given new meanings and significance to these Raags.<sup>3</sup>

The poetic illustration of these Raags in *Bani* has also given new spiritual dimension as compared to the corporal manifestation of the Indian Raag Dhyani tradition.<sup>4</sup> For example, we can compare and analyse the Raag Dhyani tradition of Hindustani music as embedded in different musical sources and Raag Dhyani recited in *Bani*.<sup>5</sup>

Both folk and classical variations of Raags have been employed in Sri Guru Granth Sahib. The indication of different tunes of ballads, derived from traditional folk music have their own significance in the context of different spiritual ballad incorporated in Sri Guru Granth Sahib because all these musical ballads have their own musicology and recital styles as prescribed in different Raags.

The tunes of these folk ballads are also the basic source of some Raags derived from folk tradition. *Asa ki Var* and *Tunde Asraje Di Dhuni* can be quoted as the best example amongst 22 *Vaars* of Sri Guru Granth Sahib.<sup>6</sup>

The Raag Parbandh of Sri Guru Granth Sahib enjoys a unique position in the development of Raagas in the context of Hindustani, Dakhni/Karnatki and Gurmat traditions of music. *Gurbani* has been classified and indexed under 31 main Raagas. This classification is a unique milestone in the Indian tradition of Raagas. For example, in medieval period, the scholars of Raagas, were engrossed in Raag-Ragni system of classification of Raagas having their own conventional schools

like Raagranavmat, Shivmat, Hanumat, Kalimat, etc. as their poetical illustrations, known as *Raagmalas*. Under these *Raagmalas*, Raagas were categorized according to different familial relationships. The *Raagmala* at the end of Sri Guru Granth Sahib too is a form of such classification, But this medieval style of classification has no broad based acceptance.

Guru Arjun Dev, while compiling Sri Guru Granth Sahib in 31 Raagas, rejected this Raag-Ragni classification and acknowledged only Raagmat, containing one main Raag and sub-Raagas. The 19th century musicologists followed this pattern, consciously or unconsciously. This classification has had its own functional value much before the evolution of the present Bhatkhande Raag That Padhti. The 31 main Raags and 31 sub Raagas of Sri Guru Granth Sahib have been classified in the following manner :

1. Siree 2. Maajh 3. Gaorhee (i) Gaorhee Guaareree, (ii) Gaorhee Dakhnhee, (iii) Gaorhee Chetee, (iv) Gaorhee Bai Raaganh, (v) Gaorhee Poorbee Deepkee, (vi) Gaorhee Poorbee, (vii) Gaorhee Deepkee, (viii) Gaorhee Maalwa, (ix) Gaorhee Maala, (x) Gaorhee Maajh, (xi) Gaorhee Sorathh 4. Aasaa (i) Aasaawaree, (ii) Aasaawaree Sudhang, (iii) Aasaa Kaafee 5. Goojree 6. Devgandhaaree (i) Devgandhaar 7. Bihaagrhaa 8. Wadhans (i) Wadhans Dakhnhee 9. Sorath 10. Dhanaaseree 11. Jaitsree 12. Todee 13. Bairarhee 14. Tilang (i) Tilang Kaafee 15. Soohec, (i) Soohee Kanfee, (ii) Soohee Lalit 16. Billawal (i) Bilaawal Dakhnhee, (ii) Billaawal Mangal 17. Gond (i) Billawal Gond 18. Raamkalee (i) Raamkalee Dakhnhee 19. Nat Naaraain (i) Nat 20. Maaleegaorhaa 21. Maaroo (i) Maaroo Kaafee, (ii) Maaroo Dakhnhec 22. Tookhaaree 23. Kedaaraa 24. Bhairao 25. Basant (i) (Basant Hindol) 26. Saarang 27. Malaar 28. Kaanrhaa 29. Kaliaan (i) Kaliaan Bhopaalee 30. Prabhaatee (i) Prabhaatee Bibhaas, (ii) Bibhaas Prabhaatee, (iii) Prabhaatee Dakhnec 31. Jaijaawantee.

In Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Raagas have been prescribed only as titles but the musicological form of these Raags lies in the centuries-old Sikh tradition of Kirtan, different Sikh scriptures and in some collection of Kirtan compositions/notations. These sources of Raag are a great treasure of diversified knowledge of Gurmat Sangeet. We have following sources of Raagas which have not been properly used so far by the

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Sikh scholars and musicologists.

1. *Gur Granth Kosh* (Pt. Tara Singh Narotam).
2. *Gur Sabad Ratnakar Mahan Kosh* (Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha).
3. *Gurmat Sangeet Par Hun Mili Khoj* (Dr. Bhai Charan Singh).
4. *Gurbani Sangeet* (Part first & second) (Giyan Singh Abtabad).
5. *Gurmat Ratan Sangeet Bhandar* (Bhai Prem Singh).
6. *Gurmat Sangeet* (Master Sunder Singh).
7. *Gurmat Sangeet Mala* (Master Mohan Singh).
8. *Gurbani Sangeet Pracheen Reet Ratnavli* (Dr. Bhai Avtar Singh, Gurcharan Singh).
9. *Shri Guru Granth Sahib Rag Ratnavli* (Prof. Tara Singh).
10. *Adi Granth Raag Kosh* (Dr. Gurnam Singh).
11. *Sur Simran Sangeet* (Parts 1 & 2) (Sant Sarwan Singh Gandharb).
12. *Guru Nanak Sangeet Padhti Granth* (Rag Nirnaik Committee).
13. *Gurmat Sangeet Vishesh Ank Vismad Nad* (Jawadi Taksal).
14. *Vadan Sagar* (Kanwar Mirgender Singh).
15. *Kramik Pustak Malina* (Parts I to VI) (Pt. Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande).
16. *Rag Kosh* (Vasant).
17. *Marifun Nagmat* (Raja Nawab Ali).
18. *Sawar Mela Kalanidhi* (Ramamatye).
19. *Sangeet Darpan* (Pt. Damodar).
20. *Sangeet Parijat* (Pt. Abobhal).

We have collected the following 147 different variations of 31 main Raagas and 31 sub-Raagas of Sri Guru Granth Sahib from the above mentioned sources.

- (1) Siree—two (2) Maajh—five (3) Gaorhee—six (4) Gaorhee Guaareree—three (5) Gaorhee Dakhnhee—one (6) Gaorhee Chetee—three (7) Gaorhee Bairaaganh—four (8) Gaorhee Deepkee—three (9) Gaorhee Poorbee Deepkee—one (10) Gaorhee Poorbee—one (11) Gaorhee Majh—five (12) Gaorhee Malwa—four (13) Gaorhee Mala—

five (14) Gaorhee Sorathh—three (15) Aasaa—one (16) Aasaawaree—one (17) Aasaawaree Sudhang—one (18) Aasaa Kaafee—two (19) Goojree—one (20) Devgandhaaree—four (21) Devgandhaar—four (22) Bihaagrhaa—two (23) Wadhans—four (24) Wadhans Dakhnhee—one (25) Sorathh—one (26) Dhanaaseree—two (27) Jaitsree—one (28) Todee—one (29) Bairarhee—one (30) Tilang—one (31) Tilang Kaafee—two (32) Soohee—two (33) Soohee Kaafee—two (34) Soohee Lalit—two (35) Bilaawal—one (36) Bilaawal Dakhnhee—one (37) Bilaawal Mangal—one (38) Gond—one (39) Bilaawal Gond—three (40) Raamkalee—two (41) Raamkalee Dakhnhee—two (42) Nat Naaraain—five (43) Nat—four (44) Maaleegaorhaa—one (45) Maaroo—five (46) Maaroo Kaafee—one (47) Maaroo Dakhnhee—one (48) Tookhaaree—two (49) Kedaaraa—two (50) Bhairao—one (51) Basant—five (52) Basant Hindol—four (53) Saarang—four (54) Malaar—four (55) Kaanrhaa—four (56) Kaliaan—one (57) Kaliaan Bhopaalee—one (58) Prabhaatee—three (59) Prabhaatee Dakni—one (60) Prabhaatee Bibhaas—two (61) Bibhaas Prabhaatee—two (62) Jaijaawantee—one.

In these Raagas, Raag Majh, Gauri, Bairarai, Soohee, Tukhari, etc. are not prevalent in the Indian tradition of Raagas. In addition to this, different forms of Raag Gauri, Asa, Soohee, Maru, Parbhati and different forms of Dakhni Raagas like Gaurhi Dakhni, Bilawal Dakhni, Ramkali Dakhni, etc. are also not prevalent in Hindustani music. For example, we have two variations of *Raag Sri* in Gurmat Sangeet, one is derived from Thata Kafi,<sup>7</sup> and another from Thata Purvi. This Raaga is recited as That : Kafi, Jaatee : Odav Sampuran, Vadi Rishab, Samvadi-Pancham, Time : Evening (Dawn)

|          |   |                                    |
|----------|---|------------------------------------|
| Aroh     | : | S, R, M, P, N, S                   |
| Avroh    | : | S, n, D, P, M, g, R R, S           |
| Mukh Ang | : | S R R, S R P, M g R S <sup>8</sup> |

Likewise, forms of Gauri, Raaga Gauri Mala and Gauri Majh are rare examples of this. Exclusive form of Raag Gauri Mala is different from other Raagas falling in its proximity, such as Raag Bilaskhani Todi and Bhairavi. This Raagas can be recited as :

|           |   |          |
|-----------|---|----------|
| Vaadee    | : | Dhaivat, |
| Samvaadee | : | Rishabh  |

Time : First Quarter of night; Jaatee : Sampooran

|          |   |   |
|----------|---|---|
| Aroh     | : | S r g, M P d, N S                         |
| Avroh    | : | S N d P, M g r S                          |
| Mukh Ang | : | r g r, S, N S, d, P M g r, S <sup>8</sup> |

In Sri Guru Granth Sahib there are eleven sub-Raagas of Ragga Gauri like : Gaorhee Guaarree, Gaorhee Purbi, Gaorhee Deepki, Gaorhee Mala, Gaorhee Majh, etc. Gauri Majh is a rare Raag as it contains all the 12 notes. In the Indian tradition we do not have any Raaga of this nature. In the Sikh Kirtan tradition, we have some recordings of this Raaga which can be sung like this Vaadee-Samvaadee : Pancham Sharhaj Jaatee : Sampooran,

|          |   |   |
|----------|---|---|
| Aroh     | : | S r G r, m P D P, N S.  |
| Avroh    | : | S n D P, D M G M, R P g, R g S R N S                          |
| Mukh Ang | : | r G m P, d P m G, n D P M G M, R P g R, S R N S. <sup>9</sup> |

In the season of Basant during which we recite Bani prescribed in Raag Basant known as *Basant Di Chouki*. In this season from the first day of the month Magh till Hala Mohalla every Sikh Kirtankaar has to sing Raag Basant. In Hindustani music, Raag Basant is based on the notes of Purvi thata, which is rendered as That : Poorvi, Jaatee : Odev-Vakar Sampooran, Vadi, Shadaj (Taal), Samvadi—Pancham,

|          |   |   |
|----------|---|---|
| Aaroh    | : | S G, m d, r S.                              |
| Avroh    | : | r n d, P m G, m G, m d, m G, r S            |
| Mukh Ang | : | m d r S r S r N d P, m G, m G <sup>10</sup> |

But in Gurmat Sangeet, we have different forms of Raaga Basant which are based on *shudh* notes of Bilawala That. In this tradition, this is a rare and real form of Raag Basant containing melodious notes. Vaadee—Shadaj, Samvade—Madhyam, Thata—Bilawal, Time : second quarter of the day and anytime in Basant Season, Jaatee : Odav Sampuran,

|          |   |   |
|----------|---|---|
| Aroh     | : | S G M, D N S                                |
| Avroh    | : | S N D P M, G R S                            |
| Mukh Ang | : | G M D N S, S N D P M, G, R S. <sup>11</sup> |

It is evident that there exists a vast range of original and complex variations of Raag Parbandh in Sri Guru Granth Sahib and we have abundant variety of Raagas and sub-Raagas much in a practical sense.

As yet, we have only traced about 31 main Raagas and 31 sub-Raags of Sri Guru Granth Sahib but we are yet to explore the treasure of Raagas, numbering more than 300 as prescribed in Sri Dasam Granth and Sri Sarab Loh Granth.

In the Hindustani and Karnataki tradition there are about 1,100 Raagas enlisted in various compilations out of which only 250 Raagas are recognised and about 100 Raagas are usually sung and played. Keeping this fact in mind, it can easily be stated that the Sikh Gurus have contributed immensely to the development of Raagas which are available to us as a peerless repository of Raag Parbandh.

It is our pious duty to keep this invaluable treasure of Raagas alive through proper means and measures for all purposes.

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5. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 83, 311, 516, 585, 642, 849, 791, 1168, 1185, 1285, 1425 etc.

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- ii. Gaouri kee vaar mahalaa 9, Raae kamaaldee mojee kee vaar dhun upar gavnhee. (Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 318)
- iii. Aasaa mahalla 1, vaar salokaa naal salok bhee mahale pahile ke likhe Tuned Usraajai kee dhunee. (Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 462)
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- vii. Saarang kee vaar Mahalla 4, Raae Mahime Hasne kee dhunee. (Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1237)
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# SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB AND THE GENDER DISCOURSE

*Deepinder Jeet Randhawa*

The purpose of this paper is to elaborate the relevance of Sri Guru Granth Sahib in the context of gender discourse. The gender discourse is about the complex strategies of the phallocentric and patriarchal value systems that marginalized the ontological multiplicity and difference of a woman. The paper has been divided into two sections. The first section deals with three major perspectives that have emerged to relocate women as sites of significance. The three perspectives are (1) Gynesis, theorized by the French woman philosophers (2) Gender perspective theorized by Gayatri Spivak and Elaine Showalter (3) The third perspective is a post gender semiotics of “cyborg” by Donna Haraway. The second section concentrates on Sri Guru Granth Sahib’s radical contribution in creating a unique sign of devotee/seeker that is disseminated with multiresponsive energies of a woman. To establish that the seeker who strives to have a communion with Akal Purakh is a loving bride or Mahla I have used insights from the texts of Japu, Anand Sahib, Baramah Tukhari, Baramah Majh, Asa ki Vār and Salok Shaikh Farid.

## I

In the perspective of Gynesis articulated by the French feminists Luce Irigaray, Helene Cixous, and Julia Kristeva woman’s body becomes a non-space of significance. The body that was pushed to the Abjectal position because the phallocentric frameworks swallowed up her difference to the marginality of a “non object” (Kristeva, 1982: 11) returns back in a ceaseless heterogeneity and ambivalence of cosmicized energies. The woman’s body is no longer seen as filth and impure but has an “irreducible relationship to the universe” (Irigaray, 1994: 25) because of its ability to give birth. It relates through an “inter-subjective economy” (Ibid., 19) that differentiates her from the

appropriated energies of a man. She enters into language and interpersonal relations not as a deficit as suggested by Freud but as an increment with surplus energy. Irigaray says that the girl does not manipulate the absence of her mother as the male child does in Freud's *fort/da* but through solidarity with her mother's cosmic energies, through touch, smell and gesture. This solidarity with her mother is a ceaseless travelling to the Other/Others in a jouissance of gift/honour. She is able to erase her egoic body and become an endless body "without economic reserve" (ed. Belsey and Moore, 1989: 106) proliferating love/pain/birth/joy/nature/rhythm. The body escapes territorialization through this heterogeneous excess, and her lips and flesh "correspond with that of the generation of the universe" (ed. Brennan, 1989: 135). The body utters its difference in a labour of love and "depropriates herself without self interest" (ed. Belsey and Moore, 1989: 107) transforming her from an abject/non-object to a site of ambivalent heterogeneity in Kristeva's sense. To Kristeva the woman's semiotic energies transcend difilement and pure/impure dichotomy shattering the phallogentric rules to reverberate in "rhythm, music, ...language" (Kristeva, 1980: 165). She becomes a "multiplied, stratified and heteronomous subject of enunciation" (Ibid., 172). The border/alterity of being a non-object/significance becomes a body of heterogeneous flows that utters itself simultaneously in sentence/silence. The semiotics of a woman's body negotiates a distinct signifier/signified relation against the Saussurian one dimensional rational sign that led to assimilative and hegemonic semiotics. The female body as a site of multiple dialogue with the others /culture/history/body led to a distinct *l'écriture féminine* that stressed her difference and specificity.

The second socio-historical perspective of gender discourse emerged under the influence of Foucault and Marx and stressed upon the need to understand the multiple social, political, economic, religious, strategies and ideologies that excluded woman as a subject. The gender semiotics in contradistinction to the French feminists de-emphasize the significance of woman's body, instead they examine how women are "embodied as the effect rather than the source of discursive and other symbol-making practices" (ed. Kelly, 162). Elaine Showalter talks of women having constituted a "subculture" (Showalter, 1997: 11) in order

to establish a female aesthetics during the 18/19th century and after the 1st World war. Women writers tried to cut through the phallocentric barriers by applying “feminist ideology to language” (Ibid., 241). The utterance of a female sentence is however not without its share of problems. The authentic voice as elaborated by Spivak in her essay “Can the Subaltern speak?” is never heard. The female voice/ sentence continued to be regulated by dominant ideologies, class, gender, she remains “double effaced” (ed. Williams and Chrisman, 1994: 82). Sara Mills is of the view that the text becomes a “site of negotiation” (Mills, 1995: 34) as it passes from the production to the reader reception stage. The authentic voice of a woman is not restricted to what is articulated in the text but goes beyond content where power, body, syntax are all put in flux. Spivak criticizes the French feminists for being caught up in an essentialist trap because women’s excess and difference is continuously being eroded by the networks of power and production. These relations alienate the third world women from the 1st world women. Women continue to confront double repression within patriarchy and political economies of the dominant frameworks. Spivak criticizes Marxism for excluding “womb as workshop” (ed. Landry and Maclean, : 53) and labour from its discourse. Both Marx and Freud marginalize the womb as site/space of production and labour. Women are further territorialized when questions of race and cultural difference are abandoned because Western feminism becomes complicit with “historical and political economy” (Ibid., 60). The non-Western women’s cultural and historical particularities are assimilated under the Grand Narrative of “Western academic and police making discourse” (ed. Hermann and Stewart, 1994: 576) according to Achwa Ong. The issue of women’s emancipation, identity and difference needs to be negotiated from plural “culture based subjectivities” (Ibid., 379).

The third perspective of gender discourse that can be called Cyborgian using the concept of “Cyborg” that Donna Haraway understands as a “cybernetic organism, a hybrid of a machine and organism, a creature of social reality... creature of fiction” (Ibid., 424), is a post gender semiotics that negotiates women’s possibilities in “non-oedipal narratives” (Ibid., 425) in the universe. This Cyborgian semiotics according to Haraway has emerged out of women’s experience in the



late twentieth century. This non-unitive and liberative network of her deterritorialized flows has evolved with the inrush of information technology and cybernetic networks. Here women's libidinal excess alters their one dimensional signifier/signified relation to become floating signifiers. The heterogeneity of the female energies proliferates to subvert command and control. Instead the emancipated energies negotiate "disassembly, reassembly, investment and exchange" (Ibid., 437) resisting territorialization. Haraway's notion of Cyborg as a site of deterritorialized flows is very close to Deleuze's and Guattari's notions. In Lyotard's sense these post-gender energies can be understood as tensorial signs that cannot be fully manipulated and are always in flux. The Cyborg semiotics becomes an "infidel heteroglossia" (Ibid., 452) where race/gender/culture/body/ are put into an "intimate experience of boundaries... construction and deconstruction" (Ibid., 452).

## II

The relevance of Sri Guru Granth Sahib in the context of gender discourse lies in structuring a semiotics that cuts through medieval phallocentric and patriarchal discourses. The Granth creates a unique sign that simultaneously negotiates two signifieds. In the Granth the ultimate creator is Akal Purakh who is neither male nor female. Karta Purakh is creative totality and is "Vigsai Veparwah"—the Carefree Blooms (Japuji), who communicates *Vismād*/wonder through a ceaseless inrush of blossoming energy that defies categorization. The seeker/devotee is to establish communion with this Karta Purakh who is *Sargun* and *Nirgun*, has created the entire universe and loves the diversity of His creation and continuously bestows gifts on his people. In Rāg Āsā Mahla 1, it is said: "He Himself has Created and assigned names" (Shabdārth Sri Guru Granth Sahib, 1986: 463). The Purakh celebrates the Vismādic heterogeneity of the universe: "Seated He watches zestfully (Ibid., 463). The entire cosmos reverberates with the Creator's *Nām* and *Prasād*/kindness. The seeker is in awe of the majestic grandeur of the Creator's diverse creation: "In awe blows the wind in hundreds of puffs./In awe flow lakhs of rivers./In awe the fire obeys Commands./In awe the earth remains bent." (Ibid., 464). The seeker comes in "face to face" (Levinas) communion with the majestic other who inspires awe and love, and not territorializing fear. The meeting with the Ultimate

Beloved/Creator is not abstract as in the Vedas. Here the interaction is an I-You reciprocity in Martin Buber's sense that is posited with love and wonder. The Creator is *Amrit Dhara*/current of Nectar. While Akal Purakh of the Granth is the Vismādic creator this is not so in the Upanishads where Brahma or Atma is essence : "Om (is) ether (is) Brahma" (tr. Muller, 1978 : 189) and is an integrated subject. Brahma is "thy Self who is within all" (Ibid., 129). The entire heterogeneity of the universe is assimilated in Brahman "Brahman is life, Brahman is Joy, Brahman is expanse" (tr. V. M. Bedekar and G.B. Palsule, 1980: 127). In Qur'an the Allah is simultaneously full of wrath and grace. He does not inspire *Vismād* and awe but terror. In Sura II of the Qur'an it is said : "Allah hath set a seal, on their hearts and on their hearing, And on their eyes is a veil, Great is the penalty they (incur)" (tr. Yusuf Ali, 1989: 18). In the Granth the seeker meets the true "Sache Patshah." True Lord who has bestowed upon his seeker not a world of illusion and speculation but an experiential world to be experienced in totality. The seeker simultaneously negotiates the Vismādic Akal Purakh, the diverse cosmos and the existential life. In order to aspire to receive a component of the Wahiguru's gift/*Prasād*, the Granth creates a sign where the seeker negotiates several signifieds. The devotee is an ordinary seeker, an ideal seeker and a woman in love with her husband/ The Beloved. By suggesting that if the Vismadic differentility and creative majesty of Akal Purakh and the cosmos are to be realized it is essential that the seeker posits the multiresponsive and libidinal energies of a woman, The Granth creates a sign of a seeker-woman /bride that elevates women in a very powerful and incredible way. By establishing the Mahla/seeker/bride relationship the Granth makes a significant post-gender intervention. It also cuts through the feudal and male dominated paradigms that led to various kinds of repression and Oedipalization.

The seeker/devotee as a woman is a loving bride or a would be bride as presented in *Bārahmah Tukhāri* and *Bārāmah Mājh*, it decentres the prevalent phallocentric codes. The seeker libidinally seeks the Beloved in excess and complete abandon. This intense and passionate interaction between the Purakh and the seeker is a multilogical interaction. It takes place at several levels. The Granth uses the metaphor, semiotics of a woman lover who is in continuous dialogue with/*body/history/*

*culture/nature/music/sangat* and who is simultaneously able to dispossess her self to travel to the Other. The travelling to the Other, i.e., the Ultimate Beloved is to be in *Sahaj/excess*. This meeting of the seeker and Akal Purakh, unlike in Buddhism and the Upanishads, is to take place with all the senses intact and is a gift/honour. In the Upanishads it is said : “Man is a sacrifice” (Baldeker & Palsule (ed.) 1980: 113), sacrifice alone can lead to Brahma. In the Granth the lover/bride/seeker meets Akal Purakh through song/joy/celebration/body/universe. While Buddhism does realize that it is the non-egoic self or *anāttā* that is essential to realize Nirvāna, but it also advocates renunciation of the world. It is said in Dhammapada : “Him I recall a Brahmin who in this world, giving up all sensual pleasures, wanders about without a home, in whom all desire for existence is extinguished” (tr. Radhakrishnan, 1984: 185). In the Granth the seeker-woman as a sign is positioned in the diversity of the existential world/nature/body. In Bārahmah Tukhāri and Barāmah Majh the internal time, lunar calendar, climates, nature, body have been simultaneously put together in a symphonic multilogue. As each month passes and time, seasons change, the seeker as woman goes through multiple emotional responses and yearnings to meet her lover or *Kant* who has been described by Baba Farid as “the playful *Kant* who is Great and Sovereign” (Shabdārth, 1383). As the seeker receives the excess/abundance/radiance of Akal Purakh she is struck by the unstruck melody of *Vismād*. “*Vismād* sound *Vismād* Vedas./*Vismād* beings *Vismād* differences./*Vismād* forms *Vismād* colours.” (Ibid., Mahla 1, 463). She realizes that the meeting with the wonderful *Vismādic* Purakh is possible only if she swims across duality/materialism/ego/illusions, it is a meeting that will take place in the immediacy of intense passion. This is a meeting in Levinas’s sense of preparing to receive the epiphanic strangeness/*Vismād* of the Beloved who is the Absolute Other in infinity. This Other or Akal Purakh reveals the infinite heterogeneity of the universe and welcomes in intimacy. The seeker realizes that in order to be a *Suhagan*/bride and to receive the “beautiful *Amrit* fall” (Ibid., Mahla 1, 1107) of the Beloved’s *Prasād*, she will have to rend the flesh into spirit in Bataille’s sense. This rending of the flesh is to pass through extreme yearning for the Beloved. The seeker-woman is to free herself from all duality and repression. She has to float in the cosmic and libidinal excess/*sahaj* to be struck by the

Love/*Prasād* of the Beloved. In Baba Farid's Salokas, the seeker woman is totally able to de-appropriate and dispossess herself to fully commit in excess which is an "economy without self interest." The seeker woman travels to the Other in complete humility and *sahaj*.

Once the seeker is bestowed upon the gift/*Prasād*—the *Piram Piala*, "the cup of love of the Beloved" (Ibid., 1378) the seeker absorbs the sacred component of the creator and is transformed "Love the Beloved you will be transformed" (Ibid., 1378) into a *Suhagan* who is in the divine *jouissance* with the Beloved/universe/nature/Other. This divine *jouissance* simultaneously negotiates pain/suffering/joy/separation/meeting/love. It is meeting with the Other in "radical strangeness" in Levinas's sense. The intensity and commitment of the relation is beyond material calculations and is a True Deal: *Sacha Sauda*. This relationship of absolute abandonment where the seeker as a woman and the Beloved are intensely involved is described poetically by Baba Farid: "Oh Farid! The street is muddy the Beloved's Home is far away but I love Him if I walk the blanket will get wet if I stay back Love breaks" (Ibid., 1379). However, the seeker is aware that without the *Prasād*/Kindness of the Beloved she will remain *duagani*/rejected: "I have not slept with the Beloved today my body aches./Ask those rejected how they pass their night." (Ibid., 1379). Without his Kindness she is likely to disintegrate: "Oh Farid! The one who is rejected by the Beloved God she repents and disintegrates" (Ibid., 1381). Farid's sign of seeker-lover who possesses the libidinal and multi-responsive energies of a woman remains a model in the Bāni of the Gurus. The detotalitive and libidinal sign of seeker-woman is a radical semiotic intervention to dismantle the patriarchal, Brahmanical and feudal value systems that loaded the self/woman with repression and dualities. The seeker-woman is to seek the Beloved who is not an illusion or Maya: "True are Your Realms True the cosmos" (Mahla 1, 463), and be free from ego that is like a disease: "*Haumai* is a deadly disease" (Ibid., 466). Rather than establishing a one-dimensional relationship with the sacred determined by the Original Sin/Fall, the Granth invites the seeker to deterritorialize his/her repressed energies to welcome the *jouissance* of a differential and Vismādic universe/ Akal Purakh. The universe is not of calculus and abstract metaphysics but a universe of experiential festivity/excess/ *sahaj*.

The seeker-woman in order to receive the multiple inrushing energies of the Divine/universe is to be fully derepressed and ready to meet her Beloved or *Khasam/Kant* who is *Veparwah/carefree/Rangla/* playful/loving/*Pirya/dear*. The meeting is to be of intense love and ethical disciplining. This radical meeting between the Beloved and the seeker-woman is not related to repressive strategies but in Janitzen's sense the author of *Becoming Divine*, it can be understood through a symbolic of "natality" (Janitzen, 1998: 4) where the seeker relates to the pain/suffering of birth/mother. The seeker-woman is intensely and multiply mediated by the dynamic flux of energies and seasonal changes that can be interpreted as climates/phases of life. The seeker/woman is filled with intense longing or in *Birha* and feels that the Beloved is the Other to whom she has to swim across in order to touch His lotus feet : "The Friend is abroad she sends messages. Let Him reach to take care, her eyes are filled with tears" (Ibid., Mahla 1, 1111). Her meeting with Him is His gift/*nadar* (Ibid., 1112). Each month/season increases her yearning and is a journey of *sahaj/gyan/nām/sangat/body*. Only *sahaj/gyan/sangat* can liberate her from distortions and repression. The *Sangat* prepares the seeker-woman to realize and aspire for the radiant/radical/sacred meeting that in Levinas's sense is to transcend the gaze and open up the self to "recognize" the Other (Levinas' 1991: 75). The *Gyan* that comes through *Nām* and the company of saints in the Granth is not an abstract/rational knowledge. The *Gyan* in the Granth is multiperspectival that comes from association with the experiential/existential heterogeneity of life/universe/*sangat/body*.

In Buddhism, emancipation can be attained by being *shunya*, i.e., by realizing *anāttā*, non identity as composed of cosmic elements but in the Granth it is *Gyan*, whole being, existentially and sensorily located, is alive to the dynamics of nature/life /history. The *sangat* thus prepares the seeker-woman to receive the Vismādic Otherness of Akal Purakh. It is a continuous emptying of the self in the community of saints, where to the seeker-woman is transferred the sacred component/gift/*Prasād* to open up to the Creator's *Vismād/sahaj*. The Granth thus creates a radical sign of a seeker-woman who is analogical to multiplicity and cosmic energies. In this sign nature, body *Sangat /sacred/libidinal* energies are fully integrated. The sign hits out at the feudal and phallocentric valorization of the male. It elevates woman from being a

*sutak*/abject/impure to creativity and multiplicity. The Granth annuls the dichotomy of pure/impure, body/mind, and says that birth and death are the Will of Akal Purakh, thus erasing the phallocentric meaning of the then current idiom and rituals. The Granth not only criticizes such paradigms as had marginalized women but it also creates a role model for humankind in the sign of seeker-woman. In Rāg Āsā, Mahla 1 says : “Woman gives birth, woman proliferates, woman makes possible engagement, marriage... why to castigate her who brings forth the noble of humankind” (Ibid., 473). The Granth thus gives us a sign that transcends women’s biology and goes beyond our contemporary feminism. This seeker-woman is posited with multiple possibilities to meet with the Beloved and is truly emancipated and free from ignorance. The seeker-woman becomes a binding force of the entire universe and humankind, who alone can help in establishing communion with the Beloved Sacred. The Vismādic complexity of Akal Purakh/universe can only be relished if one can abandon oneself in the ceaseless journey of discovery/rediscovery, ambiguity of *Gyan/sahaj*.

While the Upanishads and Dhammapada give us an abstract rational sign of the seeker, in the Granth the seeker-woman’s journey from ignorance to *Gyan* is like the opening up of the lotus bud in absolute joy/love/celebration. When the seeker-woman finally meets with the Beloved in excess/*sahaj* the entire universe and total life forces reverberate in song and dance of pure *joy/jouissance*. In this moment she bursts forth in an unstruck melody of diverse Rāgas and symphonies :

Divine *jouissance* has happened oh my mother!  
 I have attained to the True Guru  
 I have attained to True Guru in *sahaj*  
 the mind is struck by festivity  
 The jewel like ragas with their families  
 have arrived to sing the Sabda

(Ibid., Mahla 3, 917)

This song is the true song. This is a moment of complete transformation, *Gyan*, *sahaj* and joy where the realization of Akal Purakh and the universe, have been made possible though the explosive female energies.

Sri Guru Granth Sahib’s sign of the Mahla-Bride in yearning for and in love with the Beloved Purakh, without distortions and repression,

creates a distinct semiotics. This liberative sign can also help in creating a deterritorialized world as a gift. The Akal Purakh-Mahla relationship is the Granth's post-gender intervention that still has to find its hermeneutics.

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# GURU GRANTH SAHIB AMONG THE SIKH DIASPORA

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From Fiji to Pacific States, wherever Sikhs have settled in the past 150 years, a sterling sign of their presence in such diverse locations is a gurdwara. Now numbering almost a thousand, these gurdwaras mark the geography of Sikh settlement in various localities across the globe. Just as a gurdwara, or indeed the Khalsa flag fluttering over the *nishan* sahib on top of the building or erected especially at its side signals the Sikh locality, inside every gurdwara the Guru Granth Sahib occupies the central stage as the focus of worship. This is a remarkable uniformity indeed, notwithstanding the social, cultural and sectarian differences of its followers.

However as the Sikhs have grown into viable communities in overseas locations especially in countries with longer history of settlements, new generation of Sikhs born in host states are becoming dominant component of the community.. Such second, third and even fourth generation Sikhs are facing tough tasks of building and reproducing Sikh faith and culture through individual and institutional manifestations. While Guru Granth Sahib is central to the reproduction of their religious faith, it is written in a language with which younger generation of Sikhs are becoming progressively less familiar. Most or in some countries majority are not learning the language of Sikh scriptures, or if they are learning some rudiments, usually formal literacy in Punjabi, it is insufficient to the level where they can understand the Guru Granth Sahib. Thus young Sikhs not knowing Gurmukhi are put at a distinct disadvantage in the gurdwara and as a result their general understanding of Sikh ethics and postulates suffers. In this general sense, there is a crisis of Sikh faith in the Diaspora. While for the first generation immigrant Sikhs, the cohesion of the community as well as individual's identity as a Sikh was taken for granted, for new generation socialised



in a new socio-cultural milieu, this authority and cohesion has to be created by conscious efforts. While many younger generation Sikhs are thus pleased to find supremely assured role of the Guru Granth Sahib within the gurdwara, as also for the consensus regarding Guru Granth Sahib as the most sacred scripture for the Sikh world, their actual understanding of this holy book is limited to their proficiency in Punjabi language. As a consequence, they are unsure about Sikh scriptures' role in creating cohesion of the community.

This paper describes and then tries to assess the role of Guru Granth Sahib among the Sikh Diaspora. It also touches on the issue of how far non-Gurmukhi knowing generation have been able to appreciate and comprehend the role of Guru Granth in their individual as well as collective community life. First, we need to have a look at how the Guru Granth Sahib was taken to overseas locations and discuss some major episodes associated with its installation and recognition. The paper tries to answer, somewhat partially, several questions relating to the role of Guru Granth Sahib among the Sikh Diaspora neatly summarised by McLeod :

How does [the individual] regard the scripture and how is that regard expressed in practice? Does the scripture serve as a source of ideas or rather as a source of inspiration? If the latter, is it a comprehending inspiration or is the scripture more as a talisman? Is it an intimate association or is the attitude more distant and infrequent... ? What significance [in actual as opposed to purely formal terms] does the scripture command within the gurdwara today...? What benefits are understood to derive from *darsan* of the Guru Granth Sahib? What is the current understanding and actual usage of the *akhand path* [a continuous recitation of the text]?<sup>2</sup>

### **The Making of Sikh Diaspora and its Gurdwaras**

For the Diaspora Sikhs, establishing gurdwaras and installing the Guru Granth Sahib in them is associated with some unusual challenges and events in their history of settlement and adjustments in diverse cultural settings of host societies. The first overseas Gurdwara was opened in Kenya in the 1890s by Sikh migrant workers employed in the construction of Kenya-Uganda railway line, followed by a regimental gurdwara built by Sikh policemen serving in Hong Kong City police in 1900. During the first decade of twentieth century, another half a dozen

gurdwaras were established, majority of them in the Far East. Thereafter, reflecting the flow of Sikh migrants from the Far East to Pacific States, a gurdwara was built in Vancouver and opened formally in 1907, this was followed by a Victoria Gurdwara in 1912 and then a year later at Stockton, California. These three gurdwaras in Pacific States were inspired mainly by Teja Singh, a student turned missionary. He was also instrumental in establishing the first gurdwara in Britain during 1911 with the generosity of the Maharajah of Patiala.

Thus, leaving aside Punjab with numerous historical shrines straddled across Indo-Pak subcontinent, largest number of gurdwaras is to be found in the UK, USA, Canada and Malaysia. Estimates of overseas Sikh population varies from 1.5 million to two million, much of this migration taking place in the post-partition period, and a majority of Sikh emigrants settled in just three western countries, the UK, the US and Canada. The rest are scattered across the world, from Argentine to Ukraine with major concentrations in Australia, Kenya, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand.

### **Guru Granth Sahib among the Pioneers**

First, the mere installing of the sacred book has meant considerable commitment on the part of pioneering Sikhs. The Guru Granth Sahib is a weighty volume in its standard format, only committed devotees would resolve to transport it from Punjab to distant lands. Taking the standard edition to overseas locations seems to have become an established practice through Sikh regimental sojourns abroad. Its passage must have been duly arranged and ceremonial rites observed by the regimental Granthi. It can be conjectured that with the establishment of regimental gurdwara in Hong Kong, that installation of Guru Granth Sahib would have been a formal ceremony with police honours and salutes. Certainly, it is on record when Wadda gurdwara was established in Teiping, several English officers led a formal procession of Sikh soldiers into new gurdwara, saluted the Guru Granth Sahib with other ranks following suit.<sup>3</sup>

To the question of how the standard edition got through to overseas destinations, we have some oral testimonies from older generation and also records left by previous generation. Sadhu Singh Dhami a young man from Hoshiarpur who later did a doctoral study and also wrote

*Maluka*, a semi-autobiographical novel, narrated the intense devotion of earlier Sikh pioneers in Vancouver. Teja Singh recalls in his autobiography how he carried a copy of Guru Granth Sahib with him through the sea journey in 1909. He also recalls how two Sikhs in Vancouver would take out a drum, a harmonium and would walk along the mall reciting shabads from Gurbani. Similarly, Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha while assisting Macauliffe in the translation of scriptures in London during 1908-09 had access to the full volume of the Guru Granth Sahib<sup>4</sup>.

In Britain, old Sikhs recall how someone who had managed to take a standard edition would be known in the locality and how it was used for collective worship. Since there was no gurdwara in the 1950s apart from central London, the Sikhs would hire a school hall from the local education authority or some other premises for a small fee. Oral testimonies recall how someone known to have possession of the Guru Granth Sahib would bring it for worship. This for example in Birmingham, with a large concentration of Sikh foundry workers, they used to hire a hall in the late 1950s and early 1960s. A Sikh who lived in nearby West Bromwich would bring the sacred book every Sunday for worship. As few owned the car in those days, roads were completely deserted on Sunday mornings. A Sikh would carry the book on his head with another accompanying it with flying whisk. They would walk up to the hired hall. One particular incident was recalled when on a December Sunday they had to walk through a foot deep snow<sup>5</sup>. Wherever they had no access to the standard edition, the practice was to worship an abbreviated version, *choti pothi*.

Gurbachan Singh Gill, who emigrated to UK in 1951 recalls another episode relating to the installation of the sacred book. He remembers how conditions were far from ideal. As most migrating Sikhs were single men working on day and night shifts in various factories, they had little family or leisure time. By the mid 1960s as families started joining single men, there was a consensus to establish a gurdwara. As a site was selected, the issue arose of raising necessary finance. Gill had by then become a well-known businessman and arranged for finance. He also called up Sant Pritpal Singh from Patiala as the first Granthi. The sant decided immediately to start a series of *akhand paths*. Gill recalls

the trustees' apprehension regarding the availability of *pathis* [readers] for reading the scriptures<sup>6</sup>. But to their surprise, people came forward to maintain the *akhand paths* and volunteered for the construction work, while women managed to open the *langar* from a ramshackle room converting into kitchen with stocks of tea, sugar and other necessities piled up in no time. By the end of two months period, trustees could celebrate the gurdwara having performed 51 *akhand paths* with an overwhelming response of the local Sikhs. This gurdwara, second in London, opened its doors just as Sikhs were migrating to Southall in large numbers. The local newspaper flashed the news how the new temple had become a dumping place for illegal immigrants<sup>7</sup>; it was yet to learn how natural it was for Sikh immigrants to stay at a gurdwara in the process of settlement.

### On a Fateful Voyage?

The voyage of Komagata Maru remains a major episode in the annals of the Sikh migration. During 1913-14, Gurdit Singh Sarhali chartered a Japanese vessel after staying at Hong Kong gurdwara where he carefully assessed the demand for passage to Pacific States with several hundred Sikh passengers willing to pay 20 dollars<sup>8</sup>. Narrating how he arranged the ship and was planning to float a Guru Nanak Navigation Company as part of his future business. But before sailing on the Komagata Maru an important rite of passage was necessary. An *akhand path* was performed at the gurdwara, the vessel was re-named as Guru Nanak Zahaz and Gurdit Singh ordered to build a separate room for the carriage of Guru Granth Sahib on the ship. In his narrative of the tragic passage, *Zulmi katha*, he underlined how this was important in view of the uncertainty and for his new business venture. The *hukamnama* of that day was of great comfort to Gurdit Singh and he reproduces it fully in his narrative as :

*Sri Rag Mahalla 5*

*ja kao muskl ati bnai dhoi koi na dei*

*lagu hoy dushman sak bhi bhaj khley*

*sbho bhjey asra chuke sabh asrao*

*chit awai os parbrahm lgai na tati vaye*

*sahib nitaniyan ka taan*

*ae najayi thir sda gur sbdi sach jaan [rhao]*

*je kao hovey dubla nang bhukh ki pir*

*dmrha pallay n pvai n ko devh dhir*

*suarth suao n ko krai na kich hovai kaaj*

*chit awai tis parbrahm t nihchl hovai raaj*

[For someone facing imminent danger, none offering him shelter

Surrounded by enemies, all his kin flee away

when all supporters desert, and promises of help decay

If God is remembered, no harm can touch that fellow

For the God is the might of the weak

God does not wobble, nor goes away, for he is the true protector

Someone who is weak, hungry, shivering unclothed

Penniless, without occupation, have no resources

If God is remembered, he can command like the king]

As the ship anchored at Victoria, B.C. most of its passengers were refused permission to land. Stranded at sea these passengers were subjected to long and complicated legal and diplomatic negotiations by a group of hostile officials appointed by provincial and federal government. Gurdit Singh met Mr. Hopkinson, an officer fluent in Hindustani, and employed by Canadian Immigration Department. Gurdit Singh records these talks from memory faithfully as;

‘Mr. Hopkinson took me on the upper deck [of the ship] and we talked in private. He told me, ‘look, Canadian authorities hardly care for legal niceties, and this won’t help you. As it is my job to inform the Canadian authorities regarding Hindustani customs, Mr. Reed of the Immigration Department has asked to talk with you. As you seem a gentleman, let me advise that you can only succeed by negotiating. It will hardly be of any use to seek redress through laws’.

After the talks, he finally, agreed to pay 2000 pounds [as a bribe] for dislodging all passengers, and the agreement was to pay half of this sum in advance and the remainder after all passengers were cleared’. The agreement, however, fell through as Hopkinson wanted Gurdit to take a vow before the Guru Granth Sahib not to divulge this tacit agreement to anyone. To this Gurdit replied, ‘I have never taken a vow in front of Guru Granth Sahib, he is my God’. Moreover, ‘as the money belongs to Guru Nanak Navigation Company, it cannot be kept as a secret’. On hearing this Hopkinson became quite angry and, ‘threatened me with dire consequences’. Gurdit refused the deal as it went against his firm belief in the Guru Granth Sahib as a living guru<sup>9</sup>.

This tragic story, of course, did not end there. The ship was forcibly returned and reached finally at Budge port in Calcutta. Here, characteristically again, the passengers' demanded the transportation of the Guru Granth Sahib to the local gurdwara. It soon became a major issue. The English officers [rightly] feared that it will only publicise passengers' cause and local Sikhs would probably rally round Gurdit Singh. So the climax was reached just as passengers had finished *rehras*, and were just concluding the prayer. Violence erupted, of which there are official and Gurdit Singh's differing versions, which led to the death of several passengers and some policemen while Gurdit Singh and several others managed to escape. Gurdit Singh also recorded his anger at the decision of granthis at the Golden Temple who discontinued his offer of *parsad* after the Komagata Maru fiasco. He lamented the fact that Sikh princes and aristocrats could pay for daily *parsad* and prayer, whereas he, as a *nimana* [pious] Sikh was refused this facility. He inferred rightly that it must have been so on government officials' order.

### Overseas Gurdwaras : Rites and Ceremonies

Within the gurdwara, the Granth is at the centre of worship. Devotees enter the gurdwara, take off their shoes, cover their heads [if they are clean shaven] and enter the main hall where they bow to the Guru Granth Sahib while at the same time offer something, cash or some commodities for the *langar* such as milk, tea, sugar and so on. They would then sit in the hall for a while, take the *parsad* and then depart after this *darsan*. The Guru Granth's upkeep is also very similar to that of Punjab gurdwaras. The sacred book is seated in the *palki* covered in *rumalas*. This *palki* in some gurdwaras has been hand-made by skilled Ramgarhias. In the early morning, the sacred book is ceremoniously brought into the main hall, then begins the day's routine either with the recitation of *sukhmani* or the *nitnem*. The book is kept open throughout the day and anyone can read it. In the evening, the book is laid to rest formally in a special room or cubicle after the standard set of readings consisting of *rehras*, *kirtan sohila* and a prayer. The day is over at the gurdwara to start again in the early morning. More religious and those who can afford, keep the standard *bir* in their homes usually in a separate room. The family keeps the schedule of reading some passages in the morning and carry out necessary rituals essential

for its upkeep such as *parkas*, *hukamnama* in the morning with appropriate *ardas* and *sukhasan* in the evening.

Worship and reading are two separate activities. Reading from the Granth is a skill and many literate Sikhs take time to read it at home. But there is more organised way of reading it through *sahaj path* and *akhand path*. The latter has increasingly become more popular with invitations to all relatives and friends who contribute to its organisation. It requires several people to keep a vigil for 48 hours and engage 4 to 6 people who take turns at recitations from the Granth without interruptions; as one reader finishes another takes over.

Overseas Sikhs major rites of passage in life are conducted in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib. These include the naming of a newborn child, the marriage and death ceremonies, which are invariably concluded through the reading of set portion from the Guru Granth Sahib. In inter-religious marriages, say between a non-Sikh and a Sikh girl, no case is known so far where a Sikh ceremony has not taken place. In many cases, ceremonies of both groom's and bride's faiths are conducted on the same day. Although Inderjit Singh did raise a query with the Amritsar authority regarding the general guideline on inter-religious marriages in the presence of Guru Granth, Amritsar's response was unavailable<sup>10</sup>. Similarly guidance was sought on the immersion of ashes of the departed. The diaspora practice is usually to immerse them in a nearby river, although increasingly many relatives bring them to the Punjab and take it to Kiratpur Sahib as per the normal tradition.

New ceremonies have also been added to the established ones; celebrating birthdays, new year's day, combined with more traditional purposes such as seeking blessing while undertaking a trip to Punjab, opening a new business, a shop or even a surgery or buying a new house. Usually the Guru Granth Sahib will be taken to the new premises; the ceremony will include *kirtan* [hymn singing] and concluded with a collective prayer. In times of stress or illness, prayers are said seeking help from the sacred scriptures. In such cases, individuals often ask the Granthi for a private prayer.

As noted by many observers, gurdwaras in overseas locations are more than a religious place. For Sikh pioneer settlers with no relatives to take them from sea ports, gurdwaras were the first place of rest, to

know the country and seek a distant kin or friend for assistance. Over the years, gurdwaras have taken on many functions of a community centre; its management committees meddle in many kinds of issues from personal disputes to representations and pressing demands on the host society's local and national institutions. Individual Sikhs bring all kinds of issues, personal and family matters to the gurdwara for a possible solution; e.g. marriage problems, divorce, property dispute, dismissal from the job, and of course, cases of racial discrimination. In some countries, with community's population rising sharply, such as Canada and the US, festivals are increasingly celebrated. Baisakhi is such an annual festival now organised with great aplomb and a walkout through the city in many countries, invariably led by the Guru Granth Sahib seated on a special decorated vehicle. Such a spectacle can be seen in Vancouver City as also in Birmingham or Yuba City where this annual event is a public display of Sikhs' presence with Bhangra bands, singers and various festivities going on in the streets.

Thus all cases of bans on turbans and the carrying of *kirpans* were discussed in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib and various resolutions passed to defend Sikhs' rights to wear them. Thus when Sohan Singh Jolly decided to immolate himself if ban on bus drivers' turban in Wolverhampton was not lifted, he said a prayer before the Guru Granth Sahib. The Sikh diaspora support for Dharam Yudh Morcha and subsequent political events were all conducted from the gurdwara premises. As a reaction to the Indian army action in the Golden Temple, the formation of several organisations in the post 1984 period, such as the Khalistan Council, World Sikh Organisation, International Sikh Youth Federation, were all based around the gurdwaras and most of their meetings were conducted in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib.

While the issue of chairs in the *langar* hall arose in a Surrey, B.C. gurdwara during 1999, it was notable that there was no suggestion of introducing chairs in the hall of worship. Although there was a precedent when chairs were used in Stockton gurdwara until the early 1960s with the Guru Granth Sahib placed on a high pedestal overlooking all visitors. However as the strength of Punjab-born immigrants overwhelmed those of Mexican-Sikh families in the area, such chairs in the congregation



hall were labelled 'derogatory' to the Sikh tradition and then under the guidance of a saint, removed. However, this move was un-opposed and remains a forgotten episode in California.

Reverence for the Guru Granth Sahib can be seen in many other ways. The morning *hukamnāma* from the Golden Temple, Amritsar is available on several Sikh websites. It is also projected by some gurdwaras abroad, e.g. the Southall Gurdwara prominently displays it in the entrance hall in two languages, Punjabi and English. Reverence for the Golden Temple is also seen through Sikh visitors' itinerary, which usually includes a visit to Amritsar. Diaspora Sikhs also take advantage of booking facilities offered by the SGFC for *akhand path* at the Golden Temple complex. Indeed, other historic shrines are trying to tap this source, the in-house magazine of Hazoor Sahib carries details of similar facilities and regularly advertises its fees in pounds and dollars<sup>11</sup>.

Calligraphic display of Gurmukhi *sabad* or *mool mantra* from Guru Granth Sahib grace many computer screens of Sikh homes<sup>12</sup>. There is also the case of a scribe who simply wrote it all in his own handwriting. Taking several years<sup>13</sup>, he finished a volume of 1430 pages laid exactly like a standard edition, earning himself a robe of honour from the Akal Takhat. The mechanics required for collecting standard pages, ink made, not to say the time devoted to writing the text correctly on each page underlines the reverence for the Guru Granth Sahib. It is also seen in another way. As the British Library appealed to share the preservation costs of several historical manuscripts of Adi Granth in its Oriental Department, several British Sikhs responded to preserve this heritage<sup>14</sup>.

### Contest and Diversity

Although Guru Granth Sahib commands great respect and reverence among the mainstream Sikh community, some sects, the Namdharis, and socially marginal groups, the Ravidasis differ in their attitude towards the sacred scriptures. The Namdharis have a human guru whom they consider to be a successor to the tenth guru in a series. They also revere the Dasam Granth in an almost equal measure with the Adi Granth. Ravidasis on the other hand are taking various measures to distinguish themselves from the main [Jat dominated] community due

to their experience of 'economic and social discrimination' in the Punjab. The diaspora situation in which Ravidasis find themselves equal if not more prosperous than other Punjabis, have led their community leaders to a soul-searching wishing to assert their freedom from Jat patronage of a Punjabi village.

During the 1970s, Ravidasis leaders discussed to have a competing 'Ravidas Granth' for worship<sup>15</sup>. However, this scheme failed in its track as they could not agree over its contents, which essentially meant a crucial decision to keep Sikh gurus' bani in or out from such a projected sacred book. Currently a compromise is accepted wherein Guru Granth Sahib serves as the centre of worship in the Ravidas gurdwara [increasingly called a Bhavan] though emphasis is on reading and quoting from *Ravidas bani* and of other *bhagats*. Another innovation is an amended *ardas* in place of the standard Sikh prayer. In some Ravidas Bhavans, managers used to wear a red cap, although this practice has declined.

Diaspora Sikhs have also asserted parallels with other scriptures of various faiths. In answering to the theological status of Gurbani, the emphasis is now shifting towards a description of Sikhism as a 'revealed religion' with scriptures being the direct word of God as communicated to the Gurus. This was stated to be the case in a submission to a panel preparing a directory of religions in the UK. It was felt that Sikhs should emphasise their scriptures to be revealed on the pattern of Christianity<sup>16</sup>.

### **Role in Earthly Courts?**

Since Guru Granth Sahib in the standard edition is taken to be personification of the Gurus and is revered as the living Guru, its upkeep and reverence to be shown agitates many Sikhs. The Guru speaks directly to the faithful from the book. So finding solution to any dispute in its presence has to be resolved in sincerity as the Guru is listening to arguments and pleas. Sikhs are especially careful not to take an oath on the sacred book if in doubt. However, in many conflict situations, Sikhs do throw challenges and ask the other party to the truthfulness of their assertions by asking them to take an oath on the Guru Granth Sahib as the ultimate proof of their truthfulness. If it is taken, the dispute is supposed to settle there and then.

This kind of situation has arisen in overseas setting in various ways. The law courts regularly ask witnesses to swear before God before testifying. This usually takes the form of taking an oath on the Bible. Sikhs faced this question in Hong Kong in 1909<sup>17</sup>. As Sikh cases started appearing before the courts, judges would send them routinely to the gurdwara to take an oath. As the community was small enough with leading Sikh managers knew them all and especially those characters who were regularly engaged in objectionable activities. So the Gurdwara Committee after deliberations felt that such Sikhs had no right to take an oath, which was, in many cases, patently false. Eventually, it was decided to discontinue this facility in the gurdwara as it was felt denigrating to the dignity of Guru Granth Sahib.

A similar case arose in Canada in the 1960s. It characteristically took on a more public stage, as somehow Canadian Sikh issues are prone to do. As Sikhs' cases started going through courts, the court clerk summoned and acquired a copy of Guru Granth for a formal oath in parallel with the standard practice for other religions. While the use of Sikh scriptures in the court meant, on the one hand, legitimacy of the Sikh religion as it was being accorded equal status with other faiths, it also meant in the eyes of the devout, that Guru Granth Sahib in its standard edition was too sacred to be used for such worldly and obviously doubtful judicial purposes. The practice continued for several years until someone raised a strong objection. The Khalsa Diwan Society at Ross Street Gurdwara debated the matter. Many Sikhs shared the unease about the use of Guru Granth Sahib for taking an oath. It was felt taking a false oath compromised the integrity of Guru Granth Sahib as a living guru. The court was hardly a place where standards of truth were as high as expected by the Guru Granth Sahib. After many deliberations, the Khalsa Diwan Society petitioned the court to use a small *gutka* for oath taking purposes and recalled the standard edition back<sup>18</sup>. In Britain this issue also arose and was resolved without much controversy. In courts where Sikh jurors or witnesses are called, they swear on a *gutka* as a substitute for the Guru Granth Sahib.

### Teaching the Language of Sikh Scriptures

A fundamental question, which arises in overseas locations, is the understanding of Sikh scriptures by the younger generation. In such

overseas countries, there are facilities for teaching of Punjabi language in mainstream schools. As children are being socialised into host societies with no instruction in Punjabi, there is a genuine worry about the loss of their heritage. Even the daily communication within the family becomes strained with children speaking a different language than their parents. Indeed, this is considered to be the crisis of Sikh faith in overseas countries. Repeated concern has been expressed how gurdwaras are failing the new generation of Sikhs who do not understand the language of scriptures and thus feel alienated from its religious heritage. Hence, the arguments for Punjabi language teaching were impressed upon the gurdwara managers. All major gurdwara offer Punjabi classes, though the quality of instruction has varied. In the early phase of such provision, it was voluntary teachers working without black boards or teaching materials. Much has changed in recent years. Many gurdwaras now provide for reading materials as well pay teachers appropriate wages and have also assisted in the production of such materials. Such language classes are usually predominated with religious curriculum, where the aim is not so much as to acquire literacy but to enable pupils to read the Sikh scriptures. Although learning Punjabi language is no guarantee to actually reading the Sikh scriptures, but it is a pre-requisite.

As each Sikh Diaspora community has faced diverse educational systems, several varieties of Punjabi, teaching have emerged. Until the 1940s and early 1950s, classes in the Far Eastern countries were usually taken by Granthis. Giani Kesar Singh recalls how he was appointed a Granthi in Singapore at the recommendation of some Sikh intellectuals of Amritsar. He soon found out children had no text book. As he ordered some primers imported from India, he then found these quite unsuitable for overseas children<sup>19</sup>. In the end, he wrote much of teaching material himself, his booklets became standard materials for several other Far Eastern schools.

In the UK, Punjabi teaching was started in the 1960s as the number of Sikhs in various locations grew up substantially. Two major gurdwaras in Southall and Smethwick started teaching Punjabi in the late 1960s. From such gurdwara-based classes, there have been many changes usually for the better. Currently several hundred students sit for GCSE and Advanced Level examinations in Punjabi with a slow but steady

flow of students who pass these examinations every year<sup>20</sup>. A syllabus for religious studies with Sikhism as a major option has also become available in recent years.

In America, approach is more direct with summer camps organised for a group of students. This camp usually arranged in summer in various locations, has an intensive programme of learning the *kirtan*, Punjabi language, introduction to scriptural learning classes and Gurbani discourse by tutors and lecturers. During the last decade, Dr. Gurbax Singh, a retired don from Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana has been conducting such classes across North American continent. From his experience of such camps, he has written booklets in question answer form for the younger generation.

In every county of Sikh settlement, there is much discussion from time to time about Punjabi teaching and also about the state of Sikh faith. Although 'secularist' Sikhs have provided rationale to the teaching of Punjabi language, its actual implementation would have been a pious hope if the gurdwaras concerned with the propagation of Sikh scriptures had not initiated many measures to teach Punjabi as a key to the Guru Granth Sahib.

### **The Translation Issue**

Although translation of Sikh scriptures into English has almost 200 years old tradition, starting firmly with Malcolm's *Sketch of the Sikhs* in 1805, it has been a continuous process. Since then Macauliffe's Magnus opus on the history of Sikhs as well later translations for UNESCO have become available. There are currently four English translations of the Guru Granth Sahib. More recently a French translation has become available prepared by a Canadian Sikh. With the Sikh diaspora entering into the consideration of publishers, more commercial translations are gradually replacing the largely sponsored and 'tokenist' ventures. Thus the Sikh Foundation has published Nikky Gunninder Kaur Singh's beautiful translation of Sikh scriptures, while an expanding overseas market will ensure many more.

However, the question of translation is a vexed one especially amongst the Sikh diaspora. It involves an issue of transformation as an English translation necessarily employs theological derivatives that have been developed in relation to Christianity. English language has such a

store of Christian concepts as part of its historical evolution through theological debates, Reformation and its intimacy with Papal English. What for example will be *nadir* in English? Will the word 'grace' with its firm hold in Christianity fully convey the Sikhist meaning? Similarly words like baptism for *amrit* would hardly cover what is implied in the Sikh ceremony, so is the case for many other Sikh theological terms that are almost untranslatable. Such details would have to be thrashed out in length and only then a proper setting can be prepared for translation of Sikh scriptures. In more than one ways, the Guru Granth Sahib is untranslatable.

But the idea of translated scriptures has an obvious appeal to youngsters born in non-Punjabi environment where there is a grave doubt of the efficacy of preaching Punjabi language. Certainly in the western countries, third and fourth generation Sikhs are emerging with a much better command of English, French or other indigenous languages of the countries they were born in and are being socialised.

Dr. Owen Cole in a paper argued that an English translation of Guru Granth could and indeed should now be placed side by side for the benefit of second and third generation English speaking Sikhs. According to Owen Cole;

There seems no theological reason why English-speaking Sikhs should not use an English copy of the scriptures, not only for study but also as a focal point of worship and life<sup>21</sup>.

Is it possible for non-Gurmukhi speaking Sikh to worship a translated published volume? And can it be that one day such a translated version say in English, occupy the centre of worship within the gurdwara? This seems at first an odd argument. Though Cole's article was published in a Punjab journal, no Sikh scholar noticed the provocative argument the author had advanced. Perhaps, no one could remotely imagine this to happen. But in foreign settings, it could be imagined as a future scenario. Thus, it was an American social anthropologist who caught several flaws in Cole's plea. Dusenbery argued against the idea saying such an understanding of Sikh form of worship of the Guru Granth Sahib arises from dualistic philosophy of the West<sup>22</sup>. Dusenbury argued that the Sikh form of worship is monistic in common with South Asian cosmologies and conceptual logics. He noted the Sikh worship of Guru

Granth Sahib as conferring the following attributes;

Among the worship substances whose manipulation and incorporation are enjoined by the Sikh dharma [moral duty], are the uttered sounds [*nam, sabad, bani*], the visual or oral emanations [*darshan*], the edible 'benefits' [*karah prasad*], and the 'nectar' [*amrit*] of the guru<sup>23</sup>.

Endorsing Marriott and Inden's views of South Asian ethnomusicology, who asserted that 'words, like full code, are thought to be from the being embodied... in substances that may have physical attributes, such as sound, shape, matter, force, etc'.<sup>24</sup> Dusenbury emphasised the liturgical, theological sense of Guru Granth Sahib as a symbolic Guru and its Punjabi version venerated through tradition as the authentic scripture. If Guru's words were spoken first in Punjabi [or Gurmukhi, literally from guru's mouth], its sounds and connotations are simply too sacred to be faithfully reflective in other language. Since Sikhs believe the Guru Granth Sahib as speaking to devotees through Gurbani, this voice is not mere communication; recitation itself is soothing and effacious because of original sounds and intonation. In another language, scriptures' literal meaning could possibly be conveyed, even its meaning through grammatical and theological concepts but hardly the intensity, feelings and essence of the Guru's uttering in its original Gurmukhi. Moreover, for the Sikhs Guru Granth Sahib is not just a text, it is the living Guru. Sitting in front of the sacred scriptures means to have *darshan* as of a person—as the Guru Granth Sahib is representative of ten Gurus and to seek through its spoken word [*hukamnama*, or *kirtan*] is not just ordinary communication. The word of Guru, its sounds in original offer a more intimate relationship at once soothing and of therapist virtues. Among these, the role of the scriptures assumes major importance as a keen observer has summarised it :

'is one which must command a particular interest amongst Sikhs living outside India particularly in those areas where the ability to read Gurmukhi or to understand the actual language of the scriptures is diminishing'.

Still, many Sikhs of modernist outlook would probably not mind an English version sitting parallel to the Gurmukhi Guru Granth Sahib. But even the thoroughly modern bred English-speaking Sikhs would find it hard to pay similar obeisance to the English language Guru Granth Sahib

as comes naturally for the Gurmukhi version. The historical memories associated with the compilation of the Granth, as dictated by Guru Arjan in its original language, being written by Bhai Gurdas and formally installed at the Harmandir cannot simply apply to any non-Punjabi version. As such it would nearly be impossible that non-Punjabi version could ever gain sacredness and authenticity in any foreseeable future.

In the meantime, an intermediate solution seems to have been found. Some major gurdwaras have started mounting a screen in the middle or by the sides of the main congregation hall where parts of discourse such as the daily *hukamnama* from Amritsar is displayed in its original and local language of the country. In a few years, simultaneous display of Gurbani as it being recited from the podium will be no problem. Some gurdwaras have also made available *gutkas* of sacred *nitnem* or other *banis* in English and these booklets can be read by visitors and returned at the end of their visits. Some of these scriptures are now printed in fine paper and published from Delhi, London or several other cities with demand emanating in overseas countries or such markets. Some of these *gutkas* are given over to many school kids who visit gurdwaras as part of their religious education.

In whatever way this translation controversy is debated and ultimately resolved, it is something all diasporic communities suffer and especially those settling into countries with no shared language and culture. As an immigrant tries to build a new home in a distant land, the words he once spoke, the sounds he was familiar with, and places of home become gradually unfamiliar. To the bitter end of an immigrant's dreams, s/he can neither feel home in the diaspora nor return 'home' ever again. For the foreign born Sikhs, the loss of intimate understanding of Guru Granth Sahib, besides much else in Punjabi life and culture is the price they have to pay as they leave their homeland. They can never have the kind of understanding that comes so naturally to any native speaker of Punjabi. However, it is yet to be seen if by losing the language and sounds of the Guru Granth Sahib, they have also lost the faith in some tangible ways<sup>25</sup>.

### **The Research Controversy**

The Sikh Diaspora has also contributed to researches on the Guru Granth Sahib; Gurinder Singh Mann wrote his thesis while teaching at



Columbia University, and Pashaura Singh finished his doctoral study at the University of Toronto, both published by Oxford University Press. These studies almost ran parallel to those undertaken by Punjab based scholars, Piar Singh and Balwant Singh Dhillon<sup>26</sup>. However, Diaspora research on Guru Granth Sahib led to much controversy, especially Pashaura Singh's dissertation at the University of Toronto which was [illegally] copied and circulated widely with selected quotations alleged to be of 'blasphemous' nature.

This ugly episode was a result of much writing and lobbying from a Chandigarh based group of Sikh intellectuals led by Daljeet Singh. This group found easy collaboration with some American and Canadian based Sikhs led by Dr. Jasbir Singh Mann from California<sup>27</sup>, who assisted in series of conferences where the main issues was Professor McLeod and his students' 'conspiracy' against Sikhism. McLeod, over the years, had emerged as the most eminent historian of the Sikhs, unfortunately, had also earned the ire of a small but significant group of Punjab's Sikh academics<sup>28</sup>. Among his students, three names appeared regularly, Harjot Oberoi, Pashaura Singh and Gurinder Singh Mann, though the latter was let away somehow with less severe reprimands<sup>29</sup>. It was Pashaura Singh who became a major target for Institute scholars who vilified him through vicious propaganda<sup>30</sup>. Soon this reaction was converted into action, appeals were made to boycott him personally, with many letters asking the university to rescind his doctorate. An appeal was made, successfully, to the Akal Takhat who called Pashaura Singh for an explanation and possible penance. He duly appeared before the Akal Takhat clergy in 1994 and agreed to undertake the penance<sup>31</sup>.

Although it must be said that Institute scholars were genuinely concerned with distortions and biases in academic research. But as they went about their task of finding such biases, they singled out Professor McLeod along with his students as 'proven guilty'. Rather than advancing systematic arguments in an acceptable academic discourse, they resorted to emotional appeals by branding such writings as 'blasphemous'. One cannot help drawing the conclusion that Institute scholars used such a strategy more to gain self-publicity as 'true defenders' of the faith than advance the cause of either research in Sikh Studies or point out logical fallacies of their opponents. The

misconceived but popular idea that research on any aspect of Guru Granth Sahib is demeaning and blasphemy was advanced as an argument. This argument was cleverly combined with another, that of 'foreign' conspiracy against the Sikh faith<sup>32</sup>. This was obviously an over-reaction and highly counterproductive strategy as little space was provided for meaningful and productive debate. That such propositions could be seriously entertained, argued and accusations substantiated by involving the clergy at Akal Takhat shows the fructuous level of intellectual debate in the Punjab as also the particular difficult time Sikhs were passing through at the time in the early 1990s.

Its net impact was to dampen Sikh Studies in North American universities for a decade<sup>33</sup>. Fortunately, both Pashaura and Mann have published their dissertations and have continued to write in the field<sup>34</sup>. These events also established, of course, for the first time, how the Sikh Diaspora had emerged as a major force in internationalising the Sikh faith as well setting more stringent tests for the basic postulates of the faith. The Sikh Diaspora was to set an agenda for Punjab's Sikh elite baring a new face of diasporic bonds with its homeland—setting forth a questioning yet sympathetic and rigorous debate.

### Conclusion

In all aspects of Sikh religious life, the Guru Granth Sahib remains at the centre of various ceremonies and rituals among the Sikh Diaspora. Its institutional role within the gurdwara as also central to overseas Sikhs' religious and social life is unquestionably pivotal. In numerous ways, Guru Granth Sahib guides overseas Sikhs in their daily lives. In times of crisis or stress, persons seek solace from the scriptures; perform prescribed established patterns of readings, ranging from a *sdharan path* to *akhand path*.

The community has also found strength for its collective causes with discussions and debates taking place in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib. Individuals have taken vows for collective causes and have seen to carry them out. It has nurtured their daily lives as well as provided sustenance for collective community strength. Until the Diaspora finds some other ways of garnering its strength, the role of Guru Granth Sahib in their individual lives as well as the community causes will continue to act as cohesive force, inspiring individuals to Sikh ethical standards.

and remain a major source of understanding the man's position in the universe. As the strength of the Diaspora grows, and more youngsters are socialised into the world of host cultures, a variety of approaches to its understanding as well as Sikh tenets are likely to emerge. Research as well more rigorous studies of various features of the Guru Granth Sahib are definite on the horizon and these may ultimately lead to a major transformation of individuals' lives besides influencing the evolution of the community called the Sikhs.

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3. See a Historical account of the Wadda Gurdwara [1982].
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5. Interview with Charan Singh Panchi, August 2003.
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7. See several reports in *Southall Gazette* during 1965-66
8. See *Zulmi katha* by Gurdit Singh, Amritsar, 1923.
9. Gurdit Singh, *zulmi katha*, Amritsar : Rai Singh, 1922. On this important episode, see Johnston's account where he doubts this version of talks and infers that Hopkinson could not possibly ask for a bribe. As there is no independent source for verification, it is between Gurdit and Hopkinson, whom to believe? In view of Gurdit's reverence for the Guru Granth, I would think Gurdit's version must be counted as truthful.
10. See the *Sikh Messenger* 19..?
11. *Sachkhand Patrika*, a monthly issued by Hazoor Sahib, carries publicity regarding charges for *akhand path*.
12. Among numerous such 'wallpapers' Sandeep Singh Brar has devised a screen, which seems particularly popular.
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14. Through a communication with Amarjit Chandan.
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26. Gurinder Singh Mann, *The making of Sikh Scripture*; Pashaura Singh : *Guru Granth Sahib*, both published by Oxford University Press. Balwant Singh Dhillon, *Early Sikh Scriptural Tradition* : Piar Singh, *Gatha Sri Adi Granth* : and *Gatha Sri Adi Granth and the Controversy*,
27. Dr. Jasbir Singh Mann sent faxes around the world with many quotations from the dissertation with ill-drafted and obviously hastily written letters to various people in the University and outside world.
28. That McLeod was, in his youth, employed by a New Zealand Missionary run school in Kharar, despite having not only abandoned this profession but also his belief in God, he could still be flagged as a 'Christian missionary'.
29. Harjot Oberoi and Gurinder Singh Mann were singled out, though in both cases, McLeod had been no more than one of the external examiners of their doctoral dissertations and of course later encouraged them in their researches.
30. A full narrative of the [unbecoming] language, tactics and other means employed by the institute scholars is given in McLeod [2004].
31. See W. H. McLeod, *Discovering the Sikhs : autobiography of a historian*, Delhi : Permanent Black, 2004.
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## SCRIPTURE AS A GENERIC CONCEPT

*G. Gispert Sauch, S. J.*

Scriptures are recognized as almost universally constitutive elements of religions, yet they are not explicitly mentioned in the famous description attributed, I believe, to Max Weber, according to which religion consists of three Cs, Creed, Code and Cult. I find this series incomplete : a fourth C is needed to round up the sociological analysis, viz. Community. Without community there is no religion in the usual understanding of the word. But this is not my concern here.

I suppose that we would be inclined to place Scriptures in the first of the four Cs, under Creed. For they are both the result and the foundation of the belief systems of various religions. They are the result because they verbalize an original experience lived by the founder and/or the earliest generations. They are the foundation because such verbalization becomes the permanent point of reference for the creedal articulations in the history of the religion concerned. Indeed, Scriptures are also the basis of the codes of ethics, the heart of worship and the bond that creates the community. But because the Creed or belief system generally appears as the foundation of the other C's, Scriptures, seen as the earliest expressions of the Creed, are understood as perceived as the foundation of the religion, although the real foundation is the experience which the Scriptures record. Nor can one reduce the Creed to the contents of Scriptures : some religions have tried to do so, unsuccessfully, I think. Like all forms of life, the Creed grows with time. Though it sums up the kernel of Scriptures, this kernel is seen in different light by succeeding generations. Scriptures on the other hand are unchangeably the same. If they would change, they would cease being the *pramānas* of the religion concerned.

### **Being and Communication**

The remote root of Scriptures is to be found in the metaphysics of Being. Being is Consciousness. Sat is Cit. The higher the form of Being.

the more intense its Self-consciousness and its Knowledge, the fruit of consciousness. Consciousness communicates, and the higher the form of Being the greater the communication. The conscious being cannot but be Shabad. The Word belongs to Being. "In the beginning was the Word," says St. John, "and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." There are parallel affirmations in Vedic literature, and, I am sure, in the Sikh Scriptures we are celebrating in this Seminar.

We all know of the discourse found in the Kashmiri philosophical tradition about the descent of Vāk from a Transcendent reality by stages it becomes multiple and scattered, the Vaikharī Vāk, the physical or "corporeal" (Gnoli or Padoux) or "extended" (Biardeau) embodiment of the subtle eternal Vak. I would like to relate Vaikharī Vāk to the language of the Scriptures, which consists of syllables, words, sentences, hymns, etc. In the Indian as well as in the Semitic traditions the scriptural Word manifests the Divine Being. The divine communicates in human language.

But human language is not only internally diversified but is also multiple. There are many languages and many people speaking the same language but articulating it differently. Like the Vedic and the Biblical traditions, the Guru Granth Sahib, I believe, preserves the names of the persons responsible for different parts of the Scripture and thus affirms the human contribution to them : the hymn of Guru Nanak, the gospel of Mark, the Sukta of Vasistha.... The descending Vak language does not become readymade human language. Rather it enters into the languages of human beings, of the cultures created by them, and their civilizations. These languages are many : and all of them can be and become channels of communication of the Eternal Word and therefore of the Eternal Being.

There is here the mystery that the descent of the Word could not take place except if people themselves mirror the divine model : in them too Being is conscious, and is Communication. Only through beings who communicate with one another can the divine Communication take place among us. The Rishis, the Prophets, the Gurus, lived in concrete linguistic cultures and thus could be carriers of the Divine Meaning.

### **The Human Word**

What is the human word? The word obviously is a phonetic sign.

normally one produced through the organs of speech. There is also the written word, which is a visible sign, not phonetic. But the written word, it seems to me, is derivative : it is a pictorial representation deriving from and pointing to the oral word. There is a primacy of orality even with regard to the Scriptures (as made obvious in the books of W.A. Graham and H.G. Coward). Max Weber also affirmed this when he placed the Prophet above the Priests (although he was wrong, I think, in attributing the writing of the oral message to 'priests'—the priestly is a different function).

Kalidasa gives us an entrance into the analysis of the human word when in his well-known *mangala* stanza he compares the intimate union between *vāk* and *artha* the eternal embrace of Siva and Parvati, *vāk* here standing for the sound element, *artha* for the meaning : the word is speech and meaning. (Which makes me ask : How should the Greek *logos* be translated—as word or as meaning?) We cannot separate one from the other (they are *samprktau*, Kalidasa informs us, forming one complete whole), but we can surely distinguish them. This is at the basis of any translation : we can change the *śabda* and yet keep the same *artha*, at least up to a point

However, meaning is not fully controlled by the word. Meaning is also created by the reader and his or her culture. In any communication, religious or secular, meaning results from the fusion of the text with the questions and meanings that the hearer or the reader brings to the text. This is especially true of what we call the classics, the great texts either of literature or philosophy or religion. They are really what St Augustine called 'seeds of understanding' (*rationes seminales*), and each generation collects new fruits from the same seeds, because it is a new soil of presuppositions and cultural pre-understanding and therefore produces new fruits.

### **Word → Text → Sacred Text → Scripture**

In actual speech or writings the word is of course inserted in a sentence and the sentence in a series that from a paragraph, a chapter, a speech, eventually a book. We may call this collection of words with meaning a text in a weak sense of the word. The letter I sent to my sister yesterday is a text in this sense. But in the strong sense, as found in religious as well as in secular literature, a text is the sentence or



group of sentences with a specific meaning that has become fixed and frozen for many generations. The words written on the Gandhi Samadhi at Raj Ghat, *he Rām, he Rām, he Rām*, are a text. As are the words on Jefferson's monument in the USA, "All men are born equal." Most prayers recited by religious people are "texts" in the strong sense of the word, not improvised formulations.

A sacred text is one in which one or several communities experience a special divine or supernatural power to produce spiritual transformation, and at times also provide social benefits. While all Scriptures are sacred texts, not all sacred texts are Scriptures. There are, for example, many prayers in most religions that are not found in their sacred scriptures but enjoy a fixed permanent status within the respective community and are perceived of having a transforming power. To be a Scripture a sacred text must be perceived also as *foundational and normative*. Foundational in the sense that it somehow expresses at least an aspect of the basic experience and self-understanding of a religious community. Normative in the sense that it is seen as the *pramāṇa*, the means of right knowledge as well as of right devotion and action for the members of the community. Its role is not only cognitive and personal. It reaches the emotional depths of individuals with transforming power, It can also transform the community. Being transformative of personal and community life, Scriptures put us in contact with the Transcendent—God, or the state of liberation. Because it is normative for the community not only now but through the years, the sacred text needs to be written—*script-ural*.

The act of writing the text is really not a priestly role, *pace* Max Weber, but the role of the scribe. The community needs the fixed text as norm for its life. It is true that in ancient periods the prophetic utterances were preserved in the *memory* of the community. But the Vedic experience itself shows that this is not sufficient to prevent changes in the text. Only the written form can ensure a reasonable continuity and uniformity of the text. Incidentally, from the fact of that written Scriptures are constitutive elements of religious communities we must deduce that ensuring literacy for all its members, rich or poor, male or female, is a religious obligation for every community.

The fact that scriptures are written does not lessen the responsibility

of the community for their preservation. No original manuscripts of the scriptures have, to my knowledge, been preserved, except perhaps for very recent religions. Our knowledge of the text comes from copies made by copyists and scribes, and the reconstruction of the “original texts” out of many variants is itself a science of text-study (the Germans call this text-criticism—which does not mean a criticism of the text!). The preservation of the ancient copies of scriptures and their translation into the popular languages of the people as the community spreads and advances through history is also a religious obligation of the community as such. In European medieval times there was even the theory that the translation of the Old Testament of the Hebrew Bible into Greek done by the 70 scholars (now called the Septuagint version) was itself inspired by God.

### **Human Authors and the Divine Word**

What needs to be stressed at this juncture is that in spite of being seen as a Divine Revelation (or the temporal utterance of eternal truth), Scriptures have generally recognized human authors. This is clear in the tradition of the Vedas, the Tipitaka, the Bible, the Guru Granth Sahib, all of which preserve the memory of the authors of different hymns or sections of their composition. Whether we can know or not the historical identity of these authors is not so important for us here : what matters is that the respective communities have understood that the Scriptures are sources of eternal Wisdom and are also human discourse. “The Word of God in human words,” has been the formula that Christian theology has adopted for many decades. Other formulae may be possible, but to be true to the tradition of Scriptures, we have to account for both : their authority as supreme *pramāṇa* for the community and their human authorship. The present theological trend is to stress the human character of the Scriptures and analyze how the cultural, spiritual and even geographical factors influenced the style and way of writing of each author. This is not meant to minimize the sacredness of the text, but rather is a help to understand it better. The presupposition is that God acts and manifests the Divine presence through the medium of historical human beings.

### **The Human Community as Source of Scripture**

Karl Rahner cautioned us against a narrow understanding of the

birth of scriptures as involving only selected authors in their relation to God. There is another factor in-between : the religious community within which and on whose faith the sacred writers reflect. Rahner distinguishes for the purpose two moments in the growth of a religious group : the foundational moment which can indeed last for some centuries, and the ongoing life of the community once it has been founded and its basic spiritual structures formed. The two moments can be compared to the two stages in human life, gestation and life after birth. Societies too have the foundational time and the historical development. Independent India had almost two years and a half of gestation, the time of the Constituent Assembly when the Constitution was written : after 26 January 1950 it became a mature political nation. Raimer understands the foundational time as a time when the Divine Spirit is foundationally active in the community. It is the time of the founders when the basic scriptures and structures of the community are formed. They emerge not only because of outstanding poets or writers can articulate the experience of the community, although this is not excluded, but also because the whole community is being born as something new in world history. The creative aspect of the Divine presence is felt in some way by the whole community. The whole community is 'inspired', but this foundational inspiration needs specific authors to articulate it. But the authors are dependent on their community.

A further form of the responsibility of the community is the preservation of its scriptures by allowing them to shape the thought, life and behaviour of its members. Of course this does not happen mechanically or automatically : they have to be listened to (or read, although the importance of public reading should not be minimized), meditated upon and assimilated, to follow the directives of the Chandogya Upanishad regarding the Self they must be ever more studied and assimilated first by individual saints and scholars and, through them and their preaching, by the community.

### **Canonization**

Another role of the community in connection with the Scriptural text is to determine its closure. This is what we celebrate this year with regard to the Guru Granth Sahib. Closure is not the arbitrary decision. Closure is a necessary act to enable the scriptures to fulfil their role. If

they have to be the norm for the life of the community, to ensure the continuity of the authentic tradition, scriptures have to be defined, they have to be “canonized.” “Canonization” does not mean just ‘making saint’ or ‘declaring sacred’ but its original meaning is ‘making the canon’, i.e., the measuring rod (*kanōn* in Greek), the rule with which we can measure ourselves. Every pregnancy has to be concluded by a birth, otherwise the individual cannot live its own life. Every, social institution needs its ‘constitution’, its charter, its foundational statement, which gives it orientation and meaning. We cannot measure the length of a room with an elastic measuring instrument : the measuring rod must be fixed, determinate. Scriptures must be canonized. The factors that induce a community to do that are complex and manifold. As a believer I would think that they are governed by a Divine Providence that watches over the formation of the community : the closure no less than the writing must be attributed to the Spirit of God who presides over human history and works through it.

### **The Hermeneutical Task**

In the process of assimilation of the Scriptures there is always a re-reading of the sacred Word according to the circumstances of the time. As I said earlier, reading is not merely the capture of a meaning already there, as if it were waiting for us. Reading is a production of meaning : we read in the light of our concerns and needs. We bring our contribution to the text. For a word can have many meanings, and every text too. Out of the many meanings we select in reading those that meet our needs, not necessarily those that agree with our thinking or ways of acting, but rather those that challenge them. In the Latin language *legere*, to read, means also to pick up, to choose, *seligere* or “select.” Of course, I can manipulate the text to support my prejudices. I can also allow the text to challenge them. In the measure in which by repeated reading we become submissive to the text, in that measure our lives can be transformed. And the same can be said of the community’s life. Reading involves interpretation in each context of life. Reading is a *now* activity, not a throwback into the past. It rather looks to the future. It is important to integrate into our reading the original dynamism of the prophetic word. Most founders and new movements were a protest against the situation of their times, both the spiritual

situation and the social conditions. Most of them favoured those who were not favoured by society. It may happen that the traditional reading and commentary on the Scripture has been overlaid with conformist rather than with the protest spirit. This should be corrected.

It can even happen that the original writers of the community's faith were themselves unconsciously slaves of oppressive cultural or linguistic structures that entered obliquely, so to say, in their wording. For the whole community may have been conditioned by its history so that it could not at once discover the prophetic thrust of the new revelation. It is here that Paul Ricoeur has called for a hermeneutics of suspicion.

Postmodern work has made us aware of how texts connect with other texts, of how they reinterpret and comment on each other. This prompts us to give fresh consideration to the question of intertextuality. The interpreter cannot abstract from the interplay of text with each other, but is part of that interplay, and, if he or she does not take full account of it, will fall victim of it. These points suffice to show that today, more than ever, hermeneutics is a wide open task (Buhler, 297).

This happens specially because the Scriptures soon become the property, so to say, of the dominant classes, specially the priests and theologians. There may be need to bring to the reading a new mentality which is really the old concern of the origins. This is the *hermeneutical suspicion* so much stressed by Juan Segundo.

The role of the Divine Spirit is not limited to the formulation and the closure of the sacred Scriptures but continues in the way they are preserved and above all in the reading or chanting of them. I must make it clear that I speak as a theologian for whom the question of faith is an essential element of all religion. Panikkar has written that faith is a constitutive element of the human being.... The human being who reads or listens to the Scripture does so in faith. That is why the most eminent place to read the Scriptures is in the community worship. It is there specially that Scriptures reveal their power. But even in private reading one needs to submit oneself to the action of the Divine Spirit for the reading to be fruitful. The attitudes with which one takes up the Sacred Text, reverences it, reads it with humility, are signs of that submission, of that spirit of faith. Then one can begin the *śravana* (or perhaps

*pātha*), *manana* and *nididhyāsana* of our tradition. The Patristic tradition of the west spoke similarly of *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*.

St Ignatius of Loyola, to whose spiritual tradition I belong, recommends the meditator to begin his exercise of meditation by asking from God “what I want to obtain,” but then leaving it to God to illumine us as God wants. In other words, we enter with an active mind, not with a lazy or purely passive attitude. The active mind has a *jijñāsā* that seeks. “What I want” is in a sense provisional and of a general nature. It may be, for instance, a desire to know myself better, or light to know my duty in a concrete situation, or the strength to fulfil my obligations better. This desire informs our meditation. It involves an awareness of our basic attitudes to authentic values, of the problems which we face at the time, whether personally or collectively. I mention this because I think that the problems of the world should enter into that moment of *manana*. In the process of meditation “what I want” will be directed to more concrete desires and will to act in the directions illumined by God through the Scripture. For as the *manana* progresses we enter into the stage of *nididhyāsana* when our mental activity diminishes and we become listeners of the Word. At that moment the dialogue with the divine Presence becomes particularly important. It is not so much a dialogue of words as an openness of the heart to the divine Spirit, with readiness to enter into the way the Spirit leads us to be and act in the world today. In this way we read not only what is before the text, i.e., the meaning in the mind of the human author of the text, but also what is *in* the text as I read it today, in my spiritual present, and what is *in front* of the text, i.e., what the text leads me to.

I said earlier that a text can have many meanings and that selecting one meaning is the role of *legere*, of ‘reading’. The meanings analyzed in the Indian literary criticism are *abhidhā* or direct meaning, *laksanā* or indirect meaning and *dhvani* or *vyanjanā* or suggested meaning. Modern linguistics have similar analyses. These are well-known and I do not need to dwell on them. I would only stress that the *dhvani* meaning is part and parcel of the text, although it may vary with the readers and circumstances. We cannot read poetry with a pedestrian frame of mind : we have to let our creative imagination fly, otherwise we miss the power of poetry. We cannot read a sacred text without being attuned to the Divine Spirit speaking through it. *Dhvani* is an essential part of our reading.

### **Can we Read One Another's Scriptures?**

I come now to the question whether we can read one another's Scriptures meaningfully. In fact for us in India the answer may be evident. Mahatma Gandhi and many others have promoted the joint reading of different scriptures and as well as the individual reading of other Scriptures for many years. In general the experience is found fruitful. Is such inter-religious reading authentic? Does it falsify the message contained in Scripture? Is it not a profanation of a sacred text? Let us first reflect what are the conditions and the implications of this 'intertextuality'. Texts are related not only through borrowings and mutual influences, but also because they proceed from a common humanity at the root of which there is a search of God, and because they refer to a future point of Transcendence that is also common.

People have discussed whether the concept of Brahman or Ātman or Īśvara, the Omkara, or the figures of Śiva and Visnu are "ultimately" the same. At the conceptual and mythical level they are of course different. In a seminar a few weeks ago in Delhi Professor Wagish Shukla insisted that there was no concept of God in Hinduism. His argument, among others, is that the Hindu Gods (and I suppose the Hindu references to the Brahman and Atman) are not creator Gods which is essential to the Christian understanding of. On this argument there is no concept of "God" in Islam either, if by God we mean the Christian perception of the Divine, which is traditionally Trinitarian! But the referent of a word must not be identified with its definition or with the perception a particular person or culture has. If we would stretch this line of thinking there would be no communication possible. Nobody would be a father except if it coincided exactly with my experience and understanding of my "father"! This is not my view. Though conceived differently, we do speak of and seek the same Ultimate Reality, even when we do not call it God, This is how the Second Vatican Council presented to Christians, in traditional Christian language, this commonality of humanity in 1965 :

All nations are one community and have one origin, because God caused the whole human race to dwell on the whole face of the earth. They also have one final end, God, whole providence, manifestation of goodness and plans for salvation are extended to all. (NA 1)

I think this can be an agreed basis for the acceptance of a common search.

### **Mediaeval Attempts at Relating the Jewish and the Christian Scriptures**

It may be interesting to reflect on the way the Christian tradition, once formed as a separate community from Judaism, insisted on keeping the Jewish scriptures (the Old Testament) as part of its heritage, and the techniques it used to “appropriate” or read the meaning of the old text within the new faith. Mediaeval authors spoke of four senses of scripture. They were summarized in a famous Latin couplet that could be translated thus :

The LETTER tell us what happened,  
ALLEGORY what we must hold;  
TROPOLOGY how we should act,  
ANAGOGY shows the final goal.

(1) First there is the *literal* sense, what we may call the textual meaning. It is also called the historical meaning, It must be understood in a broad sense. It refers to what the author or authors of the text meant and is found in the text. Note that the ‘literal’ sense is not the same as *abhidha* : it may include *lakshana* and even *vyanjana*. If Jesus is called ‘the lion of Judah’ the ‘literal meaning’ is not the animal you find in the ‘Gimnar forest but that Jesus is the strongest or foremost among the Jews. And moreover, his ‘strength’ is not to be thought of as physical but a spiritual power, worthy of discipleship. Hence the literal meaning can include the three *vrittis* or *śaktis* of the Indian sahityakāras. This meaning is primary and cannot be bypassed, as it is the foundation of the others.

(2) The second meaning, ‘*allegory*’, is also called the Christological meaning. It implies a faith perception that the Jewish history and its scriptures are in the Divine plan related to the event of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament is used as a lens to understand the meaning of the Jesus event. Or, more correctly, the Jesus event is used as the lens to interpret the real meaning of the Old Testament. This kind of reading is already found in the New Testament itself. The Exodus of the Israelites is seen as a symbolic prophecy of the death and resurrection of Jesus. This meaning teaches the central faith of the Community of Christians.

(3) The ‘*tropological*’ meaning is also called the ‘moral’ or the



anthropological meaning. It refers to the significance of the Scripture for the personal spiritual life of the Christian who reads it. The reader or listener of the text applies it to his or her own personal life and reads it as a personal message of God calling her or him to a better way of life. This is essentially what later is called the spiritual sense of the Scriptures, the spiritual reading. St Ignatius when teaching us to meditate, regularly ends his instructions by calling us to reflect on ourselves and discover what it means for us.

(4) Finally the '*anagogical*' [not analogical] meaning the 'upward meaning' or 'higher meaning', also called the eschatological sense. The readers discover in the account of the Scripture a kind of prophecy not so much for the present world where they are called to act, but a vision of the final state of Moksha or salvation where all humanity is called after the earthly existence. The ancient authors also called this the mystical meaning. In this the reader in a sense contemplates the face of the Divine Reality.

A simple explanation of the four meanings is given already in an oversimplified form by an author of the fourth century. He says that the word Jerusalem in the Bible may mean the city of the Jews ('literal'), the Church (by 'allegory'), or the soul (the 'tropological' sense) or heaven (by 'anagogy').

This is obviously Mediaeval exegesis which cannot be used today, although it was used for many centuries with much profit, in spite of exaggerations and not rare flights of fancy. But we may reflect in its presuppositions. They are that human history is one great narrative that demands a holistic interpretation. No fragmented interpretation can give a satisfactory vision. Second, it implies that faith can detect the divine power as present in all this history, and this Divine Presence is the root of its unity. Third, it suggests that the goal of all spiritual striving is the same Divine reality, that Yahweh of the Jewish tradition is also the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. There are not two gods, one of the OT and the other of the NT, as the Marcionites seemed to have suggested. Fourthly, in our historical journey we can learn from one another and can use each one's insights and symbols to understand our own faith experience. We are able to integrate in what are still our partial visions the visions of others.

This vision of a grand narrative goes against the break-up of history

and of reality which is characteristic of post-modernism. I suggest that an extended reading of each other's scriptures may heal us of this spiritual disease. In our new world characterized by pluralism we are not called to break up into separate families and renounce the ideal of a united humanity. We need precisely shift from the paradigm of oneness by conquest characteristic of the colonial period to one of unity through dialogue. We need to acknowledge each other's cultural and spiritual traditions. This is what the document on religions of the second Vatican Council did : while recording the variety of religious traditions found in the human family, it put them within a unified view of humanity coming from one source and journey to one goal of salvation. It is within this unifying axis of meaning which we can profitably read each other's sacred texts.

There are obvious dangers in the enterprise. And the first is to reduce the 'other' to my side by absorption rather than by convergence. I see in others only what is similar to me and my world. I do not accept differences. I deny they exist. Another form of denying difference by reducing divergent views to abstract language and cheerfully announce that "all scriptures teach the same." They do not, although there are many points where they do agree or at least are in harmony. Another danger is to read the other scriptures with a view to proving that mine are superior or say higher things. And so on, many other temptations.

### **The Final Word—Inside the Word**

To be rooted in one's tradition with full faith and at the same time to remain open to differences is a difficult balancing act not everybody can achieve. It needs a well thought out theology of religions and a deep sense of the mysterious character of the Divine that by definition transcends our senses and our concepts. But it needs also some experience of that "most secret" and ultimate teaching of the Gita which is also the climax of religious life, *isto'si me drdham iti* "I love you well" (18 :64). Only after the experience of this personal love of the Divine, may we enter into the world of true relationships, may we approach other believers with love, may we read their scriptures with profit. Love is the supreme Word. And silence the ultimate Wisdom.

This is why we must accept that the Word, even the Scriptural Word, leads us to silence. Communion with the Divine includes a element of silence, of quieting the mind in the tradition of Yoga, Vipassana,

Zen.... There is a place for the fourth *mātrā* in the chanting of OM! In silence alone may we discover the depth of Love.

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# GURU GRANTH SAHIB AND THE VEDAS

*N.S.S. Raman*

## I

All religions may be said to be based on four essential foundations: (a) a prophetic person or persons (b) the holy texts (c) myth or mythology and (d) the institutionalized church. Many interpreters of Hinduism think that it has none of these and Radhakrishnan is one of them. He has remarked that Hinduism is more “a culture than a creed,” which may be true if interpreted broadly and liberally. It is assumed perhaps wrongly that distinct creeds like Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism could be regarded as off-shoots of Hinduism, which absorbs them all in what Radhakrishnan has called “fraternal embrace.” If a religion does not fall into the hands of extremists or bigots, then it is all the more to be appreciated, but historically this is not the case. Every religion is by nature humane, but fanatics have misinterpreted and misused its message so as to misguide its followers. In this respect, it is highly desirable that the followers of every religion should read its holy texts or show a good knowledge of its contents. In the case, of Sikhism this is possible as the holy Granth (the holy Guru Granth Sahib) is couched in simple understandable language. On the contrary, most Hindus have not read the Vedas, the Upaniṣads and even the Bhagavad-Gītā in original Sanskrit and they are not well-acquainted with their contents. Modern Buddhists especially the so-called neo-Buddhists are mostly ignorant of Pali language and many of them cannot read the Buddhist texts even in English and Hindi translations. Hence there is a great deal of misunderstanding of the basic tenets of Hinduism (if there are any) and of Buddhism (the doctrines of which are so many that there are many schools within that religion). In this regard, Sikhism is better placed as a large majority of its followers are acquainted with the holy texts and are also familiar with its basic doctrines. In this paper, I shall try to analyse if Sikhism owes anything to the holy texts of the Hindus and see if there

are any parallels between the scriptures of Hinduism (in particular the Vedas) and of Sikhism.

## II

If religion refers only to basic moral principles, then there is almost no difference between one religion and the other. The differences between religions is based on other aspects, namely (a) the nature of the prophetic personalities who have founded a religion and given it a distinct shape and (b) the theology based on the scriptural texts, which are themselves revelatory in character as they are revealed directly to the prophets by the higher reality. The Vedas have been described as '*apauruṣeya*' i.e. as not having an author, the holy word bring ultimate in itself. This is the reason why the Mīmāṃsā philosophers describe the Vedas as being eternal in themselves and are openly atheistic. The holy texts of all religions have a transcendental status. The holy text of the Sikhs, the Guru Granth Sahib has this supreme transcendental status that it is itself revered as the last and ultimate Guru. We will say more on this later. But here the transcendental reality, God and the holy word, the *Śabda* (the *shabad*), the logos have the same status as ultimate reality and are regarded as one. The legends, the stories of exploits of the various forms of God (or the *avatāras* in Vaiṣṇavaite mythology are parts of myth or *mythos*, which have a symbolic meaning. At the ultimate level, the sound, the symbol and the ultimate person 'become identical and are one'. This is how a monotheistic system like Sikhism identifies the Lord and his message (through Gurbāṇī) as one unlike the orthodox Vedic tradition where the *śabda*, the word is ultimate and the various gods and goddesses have a secondary status. The Vedic texts are polytheistic and monotheism appears only in later stages of Vedic history in *puruṣasūkta* and *nāsadiya sūkta*. At the later stage of Vedic theology many gods are subordinated to one God : *ekam sad viprā bahudhā vadanti*. (The sages describe one truth in many ways)—(Rig-Veda.I.164.46)

It is not possible however to agree with the historical development of the Vedas as expounded by the famous German scholar of the Vedas, Max Mueller nearly 150 years back : animatism, polytheism, henotheism, monotheism and monism. He believed that the Vedas provided a perfect model for the study of the evolution of ancient religions. No believer in

the authority of the Vedas would agree with the view that Vedas have a history. If the Vedic word is ultimate, it has also no historical development. It is not possible to say, which part of the Vedas originated first and which later. For the purposes of study however, we regard the Vedas as divisible into early and later parts. Thus we may regard the earliest part of the Vedic texts as consisting in Saṃhitas, especially the Rig-Veda Saṃhita.. the ritualistic part the Brāhmaṇas especially the two parts of Yajur-Veda, the Śukla-Yajur-Veda and the Kṛṣṇa-Yajurveda (the white and the black Yajur Veda) as the middle stage of development of texts and the philosophical texts—the Āraṇyakas (namely the later R̥g-Vedic hymns and the Upaniṣads) as monotheistic and monistic. Yajur Veda was first edited by the German Indologist A. Weber from 1852-59. Of the four Vedas (Ṛk, Yajus, Sāma and Atharva) only the Rig-Veda has a remote connection with Sikh theology.

In the case of the Guru Granth Sahib, one can for purpose of study divide it into early stages (those by Guru Nanak and his contemporaries and predecessors like Kabir, Namdev, Farid and Ravidas (16 of them, to the best of my knowledge) and of the later Gurus like Angad, Amar Das, Ram Das, Arjan Dev and Teg Bahadur. The hymns to be found in the Guru Granth Sahib are set to music in 31 ragas of Indian music.

In the Vedas too, the musical element plays a fundamental part. Without being chanted in a musical form, Vedic poetry loses much of its religious value. It is for this reason that Lord Krishna gives utmost importance to Sāma-Veda, to which we owe the origin of Indian music. Lord Krishna declares in the Bhagavad-Gītā "Vedānam Sāma Vedo'ham—of all the Vedas, I am the Sāma Veda. The Vedic chant is unlike the singing of the various hymns of the Guru Granth Sahib. The chants have a monotonic character with rise and fall (*udātta* and *anudātta* as they are called), and there are varieties in the way the Vedas are chanted in different parts of India (e.g. in Maharashtra, Andhra, in Tamil Nadu, in Kerala, in Karnataka in east U.P. in Varanasi to be precise, in Punjab, in Bengal, etc.) in well-known centres of Vedic Scholarship like Varanasi, Hoshiarpur, Baroda, Pune, Tirupati, Mysore, Kanchipuram, Kumbhakonam, Kochi, etc. The difference is mainly in the interpretation of the way the mantras (or the hymns) have to be chanted, the accent and the pronunciation of Vedic Sanskrit, which is

different, in linguistic structure from later Sanskrit-say the Sanskrit of Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti. In any case, Vedic recitation is difficult because Sanskrit pronunciation is also different from Hindi pronunciation.

As many Sikhs should know, the Guru Granth Sahib itself is recited or sung in as many as 31 ragas, most of which are known to the exponents of Hindustani music (like rag Ramkali, rag Todi, rag Jaijaiwanti (which is the rag employed for the hymns traceable to Guru Tegh Bahadur), etc.

Thus there is a distinct musical form for reciting the Vedas on the one hand and of Guru Granth Sahib on the other. Here I am discussing only the form in this brief essay. The content, the thoughts of both the texts vary moreover historically, the gap between the two texts varies widely-by 2500 to 3000 years. Hence, the thoughts of the two cultures or link between the two cultures, Vedic and Sikh also vary though there is a continuity or link between the two provided by the Upaniṣads and other Vedāntic texts, especially of the Bhakti movement, which by common consent of the scholars, inspired the birth of Sikhism.

### III

It is often declared (e.g. by Radhakrishnan) that Hinduism has no prophet and no holy text. The former statement, that Hinduism has no prophets may be true to some extent, but to say that Hindus have no holy text is a misunderstanding that has to be cleared. The fact is that Hindus do not have one holy text, but many. Apart from the four Vedas and the 108 Upaniṣads (which have the status of being Śruti, or the heard sacred text), Hindus have at various times regarded the Rāmāyaṇa, the Bhagavad-Gītā (which forms only a chapter of the great epic poem, Mahābhārata and not strictly speaking a Śruti but a *Smṛti*), the *Manusmṛti* and the various *Purāṇas* (18 of them to be precise) as holy texts. The content of all these texts vary from one another. There is such a wide variety of them that it is difficult to say which of them represents the authentic Hindu doctrine. Besides these much of medieval Hinduism especially Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism of various types, owe their origin to the *āgama* and *pāñcarātra* traditions and texts which are unfortunately ignored by historians of Indian philosophy and religion. Apart from these there are Hindus as you know who are not Khalsa, but regard the Guru Granth Sahib as sacred and regularly practise Sikh

rituals especially in Sind. Many of these Sikhs have now migrated to India.

But every Sikh should have a firm faith in Guru Granth Sahib on the same level as the other Gurus themselves if not more. They are words revealed to the Gurus themselves and propagated as holy and revealed utterances to all Sikhs without exception unlike in the case of the Hindus who may not believe in any of the texts mentioned above (like the *Veeraśaivaites*) and still be classed as Hindus). There are of course texts authored by Guru Gobind Singh in the Dasam Granth, such as *Bachittar Nātak*, *Krishṇavatār*, etc which are respected by all Sikhs but do not have the same status as the Guru Granth Sahib, and in this brief paper I shall not go into the reasons for this. But the *Jāp*, the opening portions of Dasam Granth come very near to the Holy Scriptures and have nearly the same status as the *Upaniṣads* in Hindu thought. Most other texts of the Dasam Granth in this context clearly show the inspiration of Indian mythology, which is not a part of any of the four Vedas. Vedic mythology is very much different from later *Purāṇic* and *Pāncarātra* mythology. Special modes of worship and ritual have been introduced by *āgama* and *pāncarātra* traditions, and these are somewhat different from Vedic ritual.

In general it may be said that the monotheism of Guru Granth Sahib more akin to be precise to the *Āraṇyaka* portions of the *Ṛg-Veda* and the *Upaniṣads*. The terms used in Sikh theology for the ultimate or infinite reality—*akāl*, *nirguṇ*, *onkār*, *nirākar*, *akath*, *agocar*, etc are *Upaniṣadic* and refer to a reality somewhat identical with the *nirguṇa Brahman* of the *Advaita Vedāntins*. God in Guru Granth Sahib is not like the gods of the Vedas. Hence whatever the similarity of form of the texts may be, there is a wide difference in content of the two holy texts the Vedas and the Guru Granth Sahib as far as their theology and philosophy are concerned.

#### IV

The great Indologist and a pioneer in Vedic scholarship, Friedrich Max Mueller once remarked that “no country can be compared to India as ringing opportunity for the real study of the genesis and growth of religions”<sup>1</sup> One realizes how true this statement is when one discovers so many religions that have taken their birth in India (like Hinduism,



Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism) and many others that have flourished and flowered in India (like Islam, Zoroastrianism and Christianity). No other country has been the home of so many religions as India. It is but natural that we have to preserve this pluralist religious heritage in perfect harmony, mutual understanding and peace. Besides this indisputed fact, it is also true that the ancient heritage of peace and harmony should be reflected in the growth of religions like Sikhism. Max Mueller also made the following statement :

If I were to look over the whole world to find the country most richly endowed with all the wealth power and beauty that nature can bestow—in some parts a very paradise on earth—I should point to India. If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, and most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of some of them which will deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant—I should point to India.<sup>2</sup>

We Indians are truly the trustees of some of the great spiritual and intellectual treasures which mankind has accumulated by centuries of hard work and it is our duty to preserve them, supplement, propagate and distribute them amongst those who are ignorant of their worth. Whoever does not attempt this is not conscious of the high dignity and duty of the academic profession. It is in this connection that I have to point out that we have not been conscious of this duty to make known the great heritage of our religions and spend our time in peripheral and superficial pursuits.

After centuries of its existence, the Guru Granth Sahib has appeared in print only at the beginning of 20th century and translations have appeared only during the last 45 years. Only a handful of scholars have attempted commentaries on Guru Granth Sahib. This is so far as the Ādi Granth is concerned. But so far as the works of the 10th Guru, Guru Gobind Singh are concerned, I learn that they are much neglected and controversies abound with regard to the Dasam Granth and works relating to the mythical and purāṇic traditions of India like *Bachittar Nātak*. In this respect, credit must go to Professor Jodh Singh and others in this university for bringing these to light.

As far as the Vedas are concerned, till the 19th century only a few manuscripts were available. These were employed in the publication of

the first edition with the translation by Max Mueller of the Rig-Veda in 6 volumes with the commentary of Sāyana from 1849 to 1874. A few years afterwards appeared the Bombay edition of the Rig-Veda, edited by R. Bodas & S. Gore between 1880 and 1890 in 8 volumes. The other Vedas took some time to be printed. But the Vedic text had been passed from generation to generation by oral tradition-i.e. from mouth to mouth from *guru* to *śishya*. There are now three translations of the Rig-Veda—some portions by Max. Mueller, H.H. Wilson & Griffiths. We must remember in this context that while most Sikhs are acquainted with *Guru Granth Sahib*, only a few Hindus (hardly 1%) are acquainted with it as one of the sacred texts of the Hindus. More people are acquainted with the *Bhagavad-Gītā* and in the north, *Rāmcaritmānas* of Tulsidas is more revered as a holy book. Even in the law courts the *Gītā* is known as the holy book of the Hindus and used for swearing of witnesses.

## V

The contents of the Rig-Veda and other Vedas are somewhat different as we have already noted. But the contents of the two scriptures the Vedas and the *Guru Granth Sahib* also vary widely. One should note that the Vedas are the earliest attempts at recording religious experience and therefore cannot be compared with other scriptures. The development of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads have a long history of 2500 years—from 3000 B.C. to 500 B.C. Hence the thoughts of millennia of man's spiritual, emotional and intellectual development are recorded here and have influenced the emergence of subsequent philosophies. The *Guru Granth Sahib* is comparatively more recent; the verses of the six Gurus from the time of Guru Nanak (later 15th early century) till Guru Teg Bahadur, the teachings of the Gurus (about six of them, the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th. and 9th) have been brought together as *Guru Granth Sahib*. As we have noted earlier some of the compositions of some saints prior to Guru Nanak are also included. The emphasis throughout is on moral, cultural, social and spiritual values. It is in this context that the points of difference between the two scriptures can be noted. It would not be correct to say that the Vedas influenced the development of the thoughts of the *Guru Granth Sahib*. The latter may be regarded as an important stage in the development of *Vedānta*, as

many thoughts and teachings of the Sikh Gurus are akin to the later *Vedānta*, not *Advaita Vedānta* but the monotheistic *Vedānta* of Rāmānuja, Madhva, Vallabha, Rāmānanda, etc. The Vedas are mostly polytheistic in character; in the early part of the Vedas (the Rig-Veda Saṁhita to be precise) The hymns are addressed to natural deities. From these develop the conceptions of deities like Rudra, Viṣṇu, Śrī and the female deities. The ultimate stage in the development of theism in the Vedas is monotheism reflected in the later development of various schools of Vaiṣṇavaite *Vedānta* like Rāmānuja's *Śrivaishnavism* and the *Vaiṣṇavism* of Madhva, Vallabha, Nimbarka, Caitanya, Rāmānanda, etc. Guru Nanak and the other early Gurus were almost contemporaries with some Vaiṣṇavaite saints like Vallabha and Caitanya. The thought of all these saints was monotheistic, which was the trend of the times. Monotheism is not exactly contrary to the Vedas, but it happens to be the penultimate if not the last stage in the development of its thought, the last stage being the philosophical monism of *Advaita Vedānta*, which was rejected by other Vedantins. In a sense therefore, there was more affinity between the later *Vedānta* and the early philosophy of Sikhism as enshrined in the Guru Granth Sahib than with that of the Vedas. Again, the theism propagated by Guru Granth Sahib was abstract, it was *nirguṇ*, in that human qualities could not be attributed to God and any form of idolatry was rejected by it. In this sense again, Guru Granth Sahib contradicted the monotheism of some Rig-Vedic hymns like *puruṣa-sūkta*, *śrī sukta*, etc. The Guru Granth Sahib (747) categorically rejects the authority of the Vedas.

The second point of difference between the two holy scriptures is that Sikhism rejected the caste order as put forth by the Vedas in the *Puruṣa-Sūkta* and extolled by texts like the Bhagavad-Gītā. The caste order (the *Varna-vyavasthā*) is rejected by Guru Granth Sahib (in 83, 469, 1128 and 1330). Of course many of the bhakti saints like Kabir had also attacked the caste system. The rejection of the caste order seems to have been the overwhelming trend of the era: though Vedantins were all from the brahmin class, many bhakti saints did not belong to the upper class. In fact, the priestly order itself is Vedic in origin. Early Sikhism as propagated by the Guru Granth Sahib is against any priestly class within the fold of Sikhism. The reaction against brahmin community

is typical of the social thought of medieval India.

The third important difference between Vedic social thought and the Guru Granth Sahib is the glorification of ritual by the former and its categorical rejection by the latter. The Yajur-Veda of both kinds Śukla-Yajur Veda and the Kṛṣṇa Yajur-Veda, is full of ritualistic injunctions and prohibitions and an entire school of Indian philosophy, namely the Mīmāṃsā philosophy developed because of the need to interpret the Vedic word regarding dharma or ritual.

Dharma like karma has both ethical as well as ritualistic connotations. To restore it to its predominantly ethical import has been one of the tasks of the medieval saints and also of the Guru Granth Sahib. However, every religion has certain ritualistic practices attached to it, but in the case of Vedic ritual, they had become practically meaningless while losing their moral connotations. The performance of ritual in Vedic culture was meant mechanically to ensure liberation, and not one's moral conduct. As the Mīmāṃsā has interpreted the Vedic word, it eliminated the necessity for God, who has no role to play when the performance of ritual and its non-performance are the sole criteria for liberation. Indeed, the Mīmāṃsā philosophy is atheistic negating the spirit of the Vedas and denying anything like God's grace in the uplift of man and degrading the importance of moral values. The Guru Granth Sahib on the other hand is a text that overwhelmingly upholds moral and spiritual values and when one reads it, one has to imbibe not history and not a description of transcendental realm, but what has been called "the beauty of the music of the soul." It may be noted in this context that the concept of dharma is not given, supreme importance in the Vedas. It is *ṛta*, which denotes natural law of the universe according to the Vedas and is regarded by scholars as a precursor to the notion of dharma.

## VI

It would not be fair to any religious tradition if we relate it to the preceding sources of inspiration. Such a mistake has been made in the case of Buddhism where interpreters have looked to its spiritual sources in the Upaniṣads. In the case of Sikhism, there has been a tendency on the one hand to trace its main tendencies to inspiration from the ancient Indian tradition and to regard it as a part of it and on the other to keep it altogether independent of it. The former tendency would make us ignore

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the original inspiration of Sikhism, which is the latest of religions in the Indian subcontinent and the latter tendency would only isolate it from the spiritual tradition of India. Of course all Indian religions show conceptual similarities bound with the land of their birth. But one unique feature of Sikhism when contrasted with other religions is its freedom from excessive conceptualization and its purely spiritual and emotional appeal. In my view, in the case of Sikhism the Vedas have little or no role to play in contributing to development of the doctrines of Sikhism. One may however interpret Sikhism as a reaction to Vedic polytheism, the caste order put forth by it and its ritualism. In this respect the texts of Guru Granth Sahib show a common element of many other religious works of medieval saints, of India.

### REFERENCES AND NOTES

1. Quoted from J.H. Voigt : Max Mueller—*The man and his Ideas*, Kolkata, 1967, p. 17.
2. F.Max Mueller : *India, What can it Teach us?* London, 1905, p. 6.
3. The translations of Guru Granth Sahib by Gopal Singh (1962) by G.S. Talib (1984) are well-known. Man Mohan Singh's translation probably appeared a little earlier.

# GURU GRANTH SAHIB AND THE VEDAS

*Brahmachari Surendra Kumar*

This paper deals with the temporal-spiritual tenets of the Guru Granth Sahib, with those of the Vedas. The explication herein may appear somewhat perfunctory to some, and somewhat imperfect to others, on account of my deficient comprehension of the Guru Granth Sahib.

In this paper the word Veda is used comprehensively to include Upanishadic literature. It is known to the scholars that there are four Vedas namely Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, Atharvaveda, the first three called TRAYI [a conglomerate of three] also. The Vedas are the oldest literary documents of the human race and give insight into the life and mind of the people, VIROS, whatever may be the place of their initial settlements. The Vedas are considered to be revealed to the seers of yore, and as such are divine. The Yajurveda is partly metrical and partly in prose, the other three being metrical compositions. Vedas in their wide connotation include Mantra—portion, Brahmanas [explanatory applied sections of the mantra-section], Aranyaka [containing topics to be learned in places far from the madding crowd], Upanishad [consisting of philosophical topics to be learned sitting near one's teacher]. Rigveda is considered to be revealed in the sapta-sindhu region [land of seven rivers], the seven rivers being sindhu, saraswati, vitasta [jhelam], shutudri [satluj], vipasha [vyasa], asikni [chanab], parusni [ravi].<sup>1</sup>

In this paper, the term dharma, wherever used, conveys the explication as occurring in the karna-parva of the Mahabharata<sup>2</sup>. Dharma is that sustains and ensures progress and welfare of all in this world and eternal bliss in the world hereafter.<sup>3</sup> It is a cover term for the entire code of righteous conduct, covering every sphere of human activity and in every capacity or role of an individual, in relation to other individuals.<sup>3</sup>

The Guru Granth Sahib which exhibits poetic excellences of form and content is composed in many dialects. However, the saying

'nirankusha kavayah' applies here also, and consequently, it has affected its form. The Guru Granth Sahib contains the sayings of six Gurus namely, revered Nanak ji, Angad ji, Amardas ji, Ramdas ji, Arjundeva ji, and Teg Bahadur ji. It is out of modesty that the tenth Teacher Guru Govind Singh ji did not include his hymns in the Guru Granth Sahib. The fifth Guru Arjun Das ji had started the compilation of the Guru Granth Sahib. The tenth Guru edited the Holy Grantha and added the sayings of Guru Teg Bahadur Ji. The Guru Granth Sahib, in addition incorporates the sayings of thirty saints of different castes, vocations, and religious groups, namely Jaideva [Bengal], Surdas [U.P.], Namdeva, Trilochana, Parmanand, [Maharashtra]. Beni, Ramananda, Pipa, Sain, Kabir, Ravidas. Bhikhan, Dhanna [Rajasthan], Farid of Multan. Of them, Kabir was a weaver, Sadhna a butcher, Namdeva a seamester. Dhanna a jat, Pipa a king, Sain a barber, Ravidas a cobbler, Farid a muslim, Bhikhan a scholar of Islam and Surdas a saint-poet.

The hymns of Guru Granth Sahib have been arranged in various Ragas [musical notes] i.e. gandhari, sorath, dhanashri, todi, tilang, bilawal, ramkali, maru, kidara, bhairo, basant, sarang, malhar, jaijaivanti and the like. The different gurus and saints preferred the folk tunes in the ragas. The order in hymns in each raga is sabad, ashtapadi, var and those composed by saints. The sabads of Guru Nanakji occur in the beginning of a hymn.

The hymns of the Guru Granth Sahib convey social awareness along with philosophic exposition. The times of the first Guru Nanakdeva were calamitous. The then Indian society was suffering from internal and external miseries, with no end in sight. Religion was practised in most degenerate form characterized by deceit, untruth and hypocrisy. The rich revelled in luxuries and licentiousness, the mass were left high and dry and their conditions were miserable. The social spectrum was one of despair.<sup>4</sup> Not only the clashes between the Hindus and Muslims occurred frequently, in which the former suffered terribly, the caste-system of the Hindus was creating havoc with the society. As pointed out by Swami Vivekanand later on, Hindu religion was confined to kitchen and it suffered from 'no-touchism'. Even in the times of Guru Nanakji the situation was not different. Guru Granth Sahib vividly describes the conditions obtaining during the period.<sup>4</sup> In fact the Hindus in their conduct

showed insensitivity which was horrifying and as a result of it they were subjected to most horrendous atrocities at the hands of the muslims.

The Guru Granth Sahib is unique in the sense that it emphasizes upon the socio-temporal, as well as, spiritual aspects of life. To me it appears that what Swami Vivekanand did in the nineteenth-twentieth centuries for the Hindu-society by giving a social thrust to the Hindu religion, the Guru Granth Sahib, as presaged by Guru Nanakdevaji, effected the social contextualization of the prevailing religion, during the 15th century onwards on a scale which is amazing. Its intensity was so extensive and effective that large sections of the population got converted to the ideas and the ideals of Guru Nanakdevaji. The Nirguna Pantha, at the hands of the Guru became endowed with humanism. Now, this Pantha was not confined to sheer meditation and Yoga, rather it was integrated to contemporary social order. The Nirguna Pantha, in the eyes of the scholars, was to be related to the Prasthanatrayi. [Upanishads, Gita, and the Vedanta-sutras of Badrayana]. But in the Guru Granth Sahib, this dependency on the Prasthanatrayi is difficult to discern. It is not certain if Guru Nanakdevaji had any formal study of the ancient Sanskrit texts. His sayings included in the Guru Granth Sahib are product of independent thinking, intuitive self-realization, and as such, enlivened with lucidity, sincerity and spontaneity. The medieval saints and bhaktas may be accused of denigrating and maligning womenfolk. It is immensely creditable on the part of Guru Nanakji to give the status of equality and respect to women in social order. To him exclusion of women from social activities was untenable. How could the progenitor of the human beings be relegated to the position of subservience and neglect?<sup>5</sup> The Guru perceived the virtues of a married life. He himself was given to domesticity. On this count his ideas are akin to those in the Vedic texts.

Vedic texts speak eloquently about the significance of domestic life. In the Rigveda, the bride is welcome profusely. The bride is usherer of prosperity and fortune. The assembly on the occasion of marriage-ceremony is requested to bestow their blessings upon the bride before they depart.<sup>6</sup> The bride is blessed to sway over her mother-in-law, father-in-law and other in-laws of the family like an empress.<sup>7</sup> In fact, Rigveda emphasizes that a home is meaningful only when there is a mistress



[Grhinii grhamuchyate : 3.53.4]<sup>8</sup>. The Shatapatha Brahmana of the Yajurveda says that unless a man is married he remains incomplete [5.2.1.10].<sup>9</sup> To the seer of Shatapatha Brahmana home provides repose and tranquility [grha vai prathistha]<sup>10</sup>. Aitareya Brahmana of the Rigveda [1.2.5.] conveys the same idea [tasmāt puruso jayam vittva kṛtsnataram iva atmanam manyate]<sup>11</sup>. In another hymn the seer wishes the couple long life and joy of a peasant home [10.85.42]<sup>12</sup>. There is appreciation of unison in domestic life and such homes are abode of gods<sup>13</sup>. The Atharvaveda spells out what is expected of the members of a family : son be obedient to father and in mental harmony with his mother, the wife be all sweet to her husband, brothers should not quarrel among themselves and so do the sisters, they be dutiful towards each other and be all sweetness with each other [atharvaveda 2.30.1-3]<sup>14</sup>.

Guru Nanak was a witness to the barbarity that befell the people of Emnabad when Babur attacked it in 1521 A.D.. Womenfolk were humiliated. Thousands were put to sword. The Guru was shocked to no end and out of deep pain and resignation, censured the Almighty for his total indifference to the situation.<sup>15</sup>

In Guru Granth Sahib total respect for woman is advocated. I am not aware of any religious teacher prior to Nanak, who did so much for the emancipation of women. His injunction on this count supported and enriched by succeeding Gurus and culminating in the dictates of Guru Gobind Singhji, distinguished the social conduct of Sikhs. Historians, English and Muslim alike, accept this, and, underline that even in battles and after victories, Sikh-warriors never misbehaved with the womenfolk of the enemies, as was done by the foreign invaders and internal oppressors. In fact, this is unique in the sense that every war, all over the world, beginning with known historical times up to present day, has its share in dishonouring womanhood.

Guru Granth Sahib's concern for the sufferings of women got concrete shape through banning female-infanticide, sati-system and support for widow-remarriage and declaring adultery a taboo for both men and women.

The Vedic texts, as quoted above accept woman as central to the domestic system. Considering the fact that the Rigveda was revealed some five thousand years earlier, the status of woman as explicated in

the text propounding the all important place of women in the contemporary society, is amazing. In fact, the Vedic texts don't support the sati-system. In the Taittiriyaopanishad the teacher asks the students, at the convocation, to treat their parents as gods [matrdevo bhava, pitrdevo bhava]<sup>16</sup>. It is difficult to give account of the treatment the womenfolk of the enemies, was subjected to, during and after a battle of the Vedic period. Considering the respect that was given to women, it won't be wrong to deduce that they were treated with respect and consideration by the victorious side.

The Guru Granth Sahib condemns caste system in no uncertain terms maintaining that the eternal light permeates every individual.<sup>17</sup> The seer also tells that all human beings are part of the Eternal : [shrnavantu vishve amritasya putrah]. Caste does not make one high, it is the Karma which makes someone noble. Virtuous actions and adherence to a value-system enables a human being to be near the Supreme Being and contribute to the betterment of the society. Otherwise, neither a Hindu nor a Muslim can be faithful in its true sense. External signs do not identify a true Hindu or a Muslim...The attire of a Hindu or a Muslim does not count, if he is not pure in his thoughts.<sup>18</sup> The Guru Granth Sahib maintains that caste and community unnecessarily generate friction on flimsy ground, though, in basics, all religions are alike. The Guru Granth Sahib gives primacy to equality, as Guru Nanak says the Almighty showers. His blessings where the lowly are looked after and respected.<sup>19</sup>

The Guru Granth Sahib prescribes an egalitarian and peaceful society, where equality, fraternity, social service hold the ground. His total rejection of caste system and rituals is for achieving these objectives. He advocated 'Seva' a voluntary service as a characteristic of the Sikh way of life.

Introduction of 'Langar' system was made compulsory by Guru Amardas. So much so that, even Akbar had to adhere to it, before he could meet Guru Amardas, is unique. In order to give a death-blow to untouchability, nothing else could have a more telling effect. Untouchability, which is a product of the Varna-vyavastha', is linked to the Rigvedic hymn of the 'Purusa-sukta', which in all certainty, is a  
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maximally to the decadence of the Hindu society.

Guru Granth Sahib rejection of the caste-system culminated in the declaration of Panj Piare of Guru Gobind Singhji, which included as many as four from the underprivileged segments of the society.

I wonder at the wisdom of referring to only four 'varnas', when Hutton has referred to more than three thousand, and P.V.Kane has listed 175 castes and subcastes of India.<sup>20</sup>

In so far as the reference of the caste-system in vedic texts in concerned citation may be made of the "purusa-sukta" of the Rigveda [10.90.12]<sup>21</sup>, which specifies that Brahmins were born from the mouth, the rulers from the arms, the vaisyas from the thigh, and the sudras from the feet of the Supreme Being. Scholars like late Prof. Tarapada Choudhary of the Patna University held the view that the caste division of the smrti-period had not taken shape during the Rigvedic period. Vedic scholars in general consider the first and tenth Mandalas wherein the hymn occurs, to be later in time than the rest of the Rigveda. Prof. Choudhary was of the opinion that the hymn under reference has been an interpolation. The Gita of the Mahabharata says that caste-division was essentially based on professional virtue-related differentiation.<sup>22</sup> But even accepting that the caste-distinction was not rigid and malevolent during the Vedic period, none the less, references of castes occur here and there in the Vedic texts.. Yajurveda [13.5] refers to the duties of the Brahmins, ksatriya, vaisya and sudra, perhaps a very explicit specification, similar to that in the Gita.<sup>23</sup> In one hymn it is stated that the seer is a poet, father a physician and mother a manual worker and it is difficult to assume that these three belong to three different castes. In the Yajurveda [30.6-30.17] fifty to sixty types of profession are mentioned. Paraskara Grhya Sutra allows sacred thread ceremony for the sudras also. Shata-patha Brahmana [3.1.1.9-10] refers to Brahmana, rajanya, vaisya having a right to sacrifice, but no reference is made of the sudra.<sup>24</sup>

Even admitting that there was professional mobility and laxity in observing caste system during the Vedic period, it is to be accepted that the sudras were at the lowest point of the caste-ladder and got unfavourable treatment in the social hierarchy. The Vedic texts do

The sudra and dasas were at the receiving end of the social structure. In the Rigveda [1.92.8] Usha is invoked to shower boons on the worshiper in the form of fame, robust progeny and a herd of dasas [slaves]<sup>25</sup>. In the Rigveda [7.86.7] Vashistha request Varuna to serve the bestower of gifts, like a dasa.<sup>26</sup> Grassman in his Rigvedic gloss says that dasa and dasyu are the same.

Whatever may be the connotation and denotation of their terms dasa, dasyu and sudra, the fact remains that the concept of equality was definitely denied to them. This societal hierarchical subservience must have continued and gradually assumed a rigid pattern of social behaviour. The great Sanskrit grammarian Panini in his Astadhyayi gives a rule “Shudranam aniravasita-nam” which indicates that due to necessity of the society the sudras were categorised in two; one who were allowed to live within a village-boundary and those who were to stay without the boundary.

The early Vedic texts do contain such passages which support the position that, in the beginning, the sudras were free from the degradations which characterize the post Vedic period. In the Atharvaveda [19.32.1] there is a hymn wherein the person invoking the gods expresses his desire to be like by the king, by the gentry and the sudra.<sup>27</sup> In another hymn it is desired that fortune is bestowed upon the members of the society including the sudras.<sup>28</sup> Beside, different professionals are mentioned respectfully. In some of the hymns carpenters, birdcatchers, potters, dog-keepers, labourers, hunters are remembered with courtesy.<sup>29</sup> In one of the hymns, it is desired that the plough may till the land with ease, the farmer may take their bullocks to their field comfortably and without any impediment.<sup>30</sup> It may be argued that such passages are result of compulsion, as the society could not do without the services of those sections.

The Vedic texts, despite the hierarchical social order projected in its elementary form as referred above, contain a desire for universal well-being, and perhaps, for the establishment of an egalitarian society. The famous Sanjyana-sukta which is the last hymn of the tenth mandal of the Rigveda requires that we move together, speak together, think alike, sit together in the assembly for mutual consultation.<sup>31</sup> In the Atharvaveda [3.30.6] it is prayed that there be a common water-spot

for drinking, there be a share of every one in food material or social wealth and thus all stand united.<sup>32</sup>

Perhaps, one may point out, against the backdrop of the position of sudras, a contradiction and inconsistency in the above paras. But, there is definitely a longing for universal well-being. In the Rigveda [10.121.9], and [Vaj ofYajurveda 12.102] the prayer is that the creator, omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent may not harm the invoker in a violent war.<sup>33</sup> In the Yajurveda [36.22] freedom from fear is desired and good luck is requested for all including the animals.<sup>34</sup>

The Guru Granth Sahib text talks of the temporal and spiritual aspects of life with equal emphasis. Guru Hargobind ji projected Miri and Piri through two swords as part of his outfit. It has been mentioned earlier that the first Guru had seen the banality and inhumane mindset of the invader. To him, life meant a total experience, and injustice and oppression perceptible in any segment of life was galling to him and beyond his tolerance. In those days the politico-administrative machinery was an instrument of plunder and loot by the bloodthirsty officials. The king and courtiers were neck-deep in sensual revelry. The ruler abnegated their duties and justice and fairplay were a casualty.<sup>35</sup> The Guru Granth Sahib prescribes that a king must act for justice and fairplay in the society. The unprotected and helpless must be protected by all means.<sup>36</sup> The motivation behind the concept of Miri and Piri culminated during the period of the tenth Guru. Thus, for the preservation of national pride and freedom, recourse to arms was advocated.

The Vedic texts, in my opinion, conform immensely to the concept of Miri and Piri. The Vedic society was robust and vibrant. In one of the hymns of Yajurveda there is a prayer for making the physique of the invoker strong as stone [ashma bhavatu nastanuh]<sup>36</sup>. The desire to live for more than hundred years with all mental and physical faculties intact, signifies positive and vibrant pro-active attitude towards life [Atharvaveda 19.67.2-8]<sup>37</sup>. The Vedic people never thought of being vanquished by their enemies. They craved for the destruction of their enemies and becoming victorious in battles.<sup>38</sup> It is interesting to note that there are twenty-eight synonyms of “bala” [strength]. In a hymn of the Rigveda [10.174] there is a prayer for a life span of hundred years or more, which is free from enemy and gives strength to annihilate

enemies wherever they exist. In fact, battle-engagement of the Vedic people might have been a frequent event. The Nighantu lists forty four synonyms of the term 'yuddha' [battle/war]. This shows they were a martial race and took to heroic deeds and hence their longing for material and physical strength [Rig.1.179.6; 10.18.9; 10.28.11].<sup>39</sup>

The Guru Granth Sahib show analogous mindset so that the society is free from internal and external miseries. This is why the Gurus, though against idolatry, have referred to pauranic anecdotes. Guru Govind Singhji prays to the Almighty to get strength for annihilating the wicked and the devilish oppressive regime and upholding the Dharma.<sup>40</sup> On this count the objectives of the vedic people are comparatively material and mundane.

Dharma, Idolatry, Morality : As stated in 1.0.2. Dharma is that which sustains and ensures the ennoblement of the society and mankind, although a precise definition of Dharma is not easy to give [dharmasya tattvam nihitam guhayam : Mahabharata, Vanaparva. 313.117]. Whenever the code of Dharma is violated incarnations do take place<sup>41</sup> and Guru Nanak could be one of them. The Guru Granth Sahib depicts vividly the pathetic contemporary societal spectrum. Rulers priests and worshippers indulge in reprehensible acts. Hypocrisy, deceit rule the roost. The Muslims and the Hindus have forgotten the morals of their holy books. The Guru Granth Sahib does not emphasize the theoretical argumentation concerning Dharma, rather enunciate the path of righteousness and morals which must permeate the conduct of human beings, if they desire to perceive the ultimate truth. The Guru Granth Sahib does not advocate idolatry. The Akala Purukha is to be meditated upon. Akal Purukh is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. He is Formless, bereft of fear and animosity, is beyond the conception of time and birth.<sup>42</sup> He is the Truth Incarnate. His light pervades the universe. Akal Purukh is the Supreme Being. He creates, protects and destroys.<sup>43</sup>

Vedic texts are in consonance with the prescriptions of the Guru Granth Sahib. They do not admit idolatry. The Yajurveda says that He is without form and those who worship stone, tree etc. enter the realm of darkness.<sup>44</sup> The Supreme-Being is beyond birth and without form [AJA EKPAT, Rg.7.35.13, Akayam, Yajus 40.8]<sup>45</sup>. He is One and the only [ekam sad vipra bahudha vadanti, Rg.1.164.46].<sup>46</sup> He is the life, all

exist under his control He is the Master of all who exist unto Him.<sup>47</sup> Though He is Formless, He sees, hears, moves swiftly, knows each one and all. He is bright, luster itself, sinless.<sup>48</sup> The Shvetashvatara upanisad says there is no Lord over Him. He has no progenitor, is the Cause of all, but beyond the cause-effect relation.<sup>49</sup> The Purusa-Purukha is what manifested earlier and what will manifest in future.<sup>50</sup> He is the Light illuminating all and they derive their brightness from Him. In His domain neither the sun nor the moon or stars or the lighting exist.<sup>51</sup>

Hukam : Guru Nanak opines His Hukam has enabled the creation assume its form, the cosmos being under His Hukam. Thus the Hukam could be identifiable with the Creator.<sup>52</sup>

Atman : and the Supreme Reality are one and the same.<sup>53</sup> Guru Granth Sahib refers to Haumai which is the cause of all types of miseries, as it relates to learning, caste, power, wealth, beauty, youth. The Guru lists five faults which are out to cheat human beings. The teachings of a true teacher can hold against Haumai.<sup>54</sup>

Guru Granth Sahib attaches great importance to Guru, the primeval Guru being the Supreme. The importance that is given to Guru is unique with the Guru Granth Sahib.<sup>55</sup> The Vedic texts use the term with a different connotation. The term Acharya which is synonymous occurs in the Taittiriya upanisad : Acharyadevo bhava. Later Sanskrit literature, however eulogizes the Guru who dispels the darkness of ignorance.<sup>56</sup>

Karma : As stated above Guru Granth Sahib advocates pro-active live. Adherence to Dharma does not mean isolation and shunning activities of the world. Guru Nanak, while living in Kartarpur, took to cultivation. Vedic texts also eulogize Karma. In a hymn of the Yajus[20.7 ,8] the invoker prays may my hands be my strength, my hands my good acts and prowess.<sup>57</sup> In another hymn of the Atharvaveda, it is proclaimed that my right hand is involved in acts, consequently the victory will come to my left hand i.e .victory will be mine.<sup>58</sup>

Truth : The Guru Granth Sahib prescribes a life committed to right path and truth for all sections of the society. Only then one can hope to be blessed by the Supreme Being, because He is the Truth.<sup>59</sup>

There is no doubt, that the Guru Granth Sahib and the vedic texts call for a vibrant, vigorous moral societal existence. They teach us fearlessness and sacrifice.<sup>57</sup> These are what go to make a nation strong and dynamic.

Human nature, as it is, longs for something beyond material. Despite technological explosion at a speed which is mind-boggling, misery, want, illiteracy stalk this globe. The mankind cannot have contentment in life unless they strive for a moral and spiritual existence. In modern times there is a tendency to reject metaphysical explication. But one may argue that in spite of nations trying hard to ameliorate the conditions of human beings, they have failed miserably. Unless they adhere to moral dimensions future is bleak. It is true, moral prescriptions of Buddha, Christ, Vedas, Guru Granth Sahib and the like, have not succeeded in moral regeneration of mankind. Let us assume that all such prescriptions become non-existent. Then the consequences could be frightening, and, perhaps a return to primitivism. There is no gainsaying that the temporal and spiritual tenets of the Guru Granth Sahib and the Vedic texts are still relevant and perhaps the only hope. May we move along the correct path of truth.<sup>60</sup>

*Antarjami purukh bidhate, Saradha mana ki pure.*

*Sarve bhavantu sukhinah sarve santu niramayah.*

*Sarve bhadrani pasyantu*

*Ma kashcit dhukhabhaghavet.*

[may all be happy, free from miseries, all perceive good luck.

none be afflicted with sorrow] *Tamaso ma jyotirgamaya :*

Lead us from darkness to light.

## REFERENCES AND NOTES

1. 'अष्टौ व्यख्यत्ककुभः पृथिव्यास्त्री धन्व योजना सप्त सिन्धून्' ऋ (1.35.7)  
यो हत्वाहिमरिणात् सप्त सिन्धून् (ऋ 2.12.3)  
अवासृजत् सर्तवे सप्त सिन्धून् (ऋ 2.12.12)  
तवेमे सप्तसिन्धवः प्रशिषं सोम सिञ्चते (ऋ 9.66.6)  
पंच नद्यः सरस्वतीमपि यन्ति सप्तोत्तसः  
सरस्वती तु पंचधा सो देशे ऽ भवत्सरित् (वाज.यजु. 34.11)  
त्री धन्व योजना सप्त सिन्धून् (वाज. यजु. 34.24)  
यावती द्यावापृथिवी यावच्च सप्त सिन्धवो वितस्थिरे (वाज. 34.24)
2. धारणाद् धर्म इत्याहुर्धर्मो धारयते प्रजाः ।  
यत् स्याद् धारणसंयुक्तं सधर्म इति निश्चयः (महा.कर्णपर्व 69.58)
3. धर्म रामा जोईस 1997 पृ.
4. रागु माझ, वार, महला । ॥ सलोक ॥ पृ. 146  
कलि काती राजे कासाई धर्मु पंख करि उडरिया ॥



कुडु अमावस सचु चन्द्रमा दीसै नाही कह चड़िआ ॥  
 हउ भालि विकुंनो होई ॥ आधेरै राहु न कोई ॥  
 विचि हउमै करि दुखु रोई ॥ कहु नानक किनि बिधि गति होई ॥  
 रंना होईआ बोधीआ पुरस होए सईआद ॥  
 सीलुसंजमु सुच भनी खाणा खाजु अहाजु ॥  
 सरमु गइआ घरि आपणै पति उठि चली नालि ॥  
 नानक सचा एकु है अवरु न सचा भालि ॥ (रागु सारंग, वार, सलोक 22, पृ. 1242)  
 जिन सिरि सोहनि पटीआ मांगी पाए संधूर ॥  
 से सिर काती मुनीअन गल विचि आवै धूड़ि ॥  
 महला अंदरि होदीआ हुणि बहणि न मिलन हदूरि ॥  
 इकन्हा एहो लिखिआ बहि बहि रोवहि दुख ॥  
 जो तिसु भावे सोथीऐ नानक किया मानुख ॥  
 इक हिंदवाणी अवर तुरकाणी भटिआणी ठकुराणी ॥  
 इकन्हा पेरण सिर खुर पाटे इकन्हा वासु मसाणी ॥  
 (रागु आसा, अस्तपदीयां 12.6 पृ. 417)

5. भंडि जंमीऐ भंडि निमीऐ भंडि मंगणु बीआहु ॥  
 भंडहु होवै दोसती भंडहु चलै राहु ॥  
 भंडु मुआ भंडु भालीऐ भंडि होवै बंधानु ॥  
 सो किउ मंदा आखीऐ जितु जंमहि राजानु ॥  
 भंडहु ही भंडु ऊपजै भंडै बाझु न कोइ ॥  
 नानक भंडै बाहरा एको सचा सोइ ॥ (रागु आसा, वार, सलोक 41 पृ. 473)
6. सुमंगलीरियं वधूरिमां समेत पश्यत  
 सौभाग्यमस्यै दत्त्वा याथास्तं विपरेतन ॥ (ऋ 10.85.33)
7. सम्राज्ञी श्वशुरे भव सम्राज्ञी श्वश्र्वां भव ।  
 ननान्दरि सम्राज्ञी भव सम्राज्ञी अधिदेवृषु ॥ (ऋ 10.85.46) अथ. 14.1.44
8. गृहिणी गृहमुच्यते ।
9. अधौ वा एष ..... जायां न विन्दते नैव तावत्प्रजायते असर्वो हि तावद्भवति । अथ यदैव  
 जायां विन्दते ऽथ प्रजायते तर्हि हि सर्वो भवति ।
10. गृहा वै प्रतिष्ठा ।
11. तस्मात् पुरुषो जायां वित्त्वा कृत्स्नतरमिवात्मानं मन्यते ।
12. इहैव स्तं मा वि यौष्टं विश्वमायुर्व्यश्नुतम् ।  
 क्रीडन्तौ पुत्रैर्नप्तृभिर्मोदमानौ स्वे गृहे ॥ (ऋ 10.85.42)
13. या दम्पती समनसा सुनुत आ च धावतः ।  
 देवासो नित्ययाशिराः ॥ (ऋ 8.31.5)  
 समंजन्तु विश्वेदेवाः समापो हृदयानि नौ । (ऋ 10.85.47)  
 सखा ह जाया (ऐ. ब्रा. 7.9.13)
14. अनुव्रतः पितुः पुत्रो मात्रा भवतु संमनाः ।

जाया पत्ये मधुमती वाचं वदतु शन्तिवाम् ॥

मा भ्राता भ्रातरं द्विक्षन् मा स्वसारमुत स्वसा ।

सम्यंचः सव्रता भूत्वा वाचं वदत भद्रया ॥ (अथ 3.30.2-3)

15. खुरासान खसमाना कीआ हिन्दुसतानु डराइआ ॥

आपै दोसु न देई करता जमु करि मुगलु चढ़ाइआ ॥

एती मार पई करलाणै तैं की दरदु न आइआ ॥

करता तू सभना का सोई ॥

जे सकता सकते कउ मारे ता मनि रोसु न होई ॥

सकता सीहु मारे पै वगै खसमै सा पुरसाई ॥

रतन विगाड़ि विगोए कुतीं मुइआ सार न काई ॥

आपे जोड़ि बिछोड़े आपे वेख तेरी वडिआई ॥ (रागु आसा, सबद 39.1-2 पृ.360)

हिन्दु कै घरि हिन्दू आवै ॥ सूत जनेऊ पड़ि गलि पावै ॥

सूतु पाए करे बुरिआई ॥ नाता धोता थाह न पाई ॥

मुसलमानु करे वडिआई ॥ विणु गुर पीरै को थाय न पाई ॥

राहु दसाए ओथै को जाए ॥ करणी बाझहु भिसति न पाए ॥

एथै जाणै सु जाए सिंजाणै ॥ होरु फकड़ हिन्दु मुसलमाणै ॥

सभना का दरि लेखा होए ॥ करणी बाझहु तरै न कोए ॥

सचो सचु बखाणै कोए ॥ नानक अगै पुछ न होए ॥

मिहर मसीति सिदकु मुसला हकु हलालु कुराणु ॥

सरम सुनति सीलु रोजा होहु मुसलमाणु ॥

करणी काबा सचु पीरु कलमा करम निवाज ॥

तसबी सा तिसु भावसी नानक रखै लाज ॥ (रागु, माझ, वार, सलोकु 10 पृ. 140)

16. मातृदेवो भव पितृदेवो भव । (तै. उ. 1.11)

17. सरब जोति तेरी पसरि रही ॥

जह जह देखा तह नरहरी ॥ (रागु रामकली सबद 2 पृ. 876)

18. जाणहु जोति न पूछहु जाती आगै जाति न हे ॥ (रागु आसा सबद 3/1 पृ. 349)

फकड़ जाती फकड़ नाउ ॥ सभना जीआ इका छाउ ॥

आपहु जे को भला कहाए ॥ नानक तापरु जापै जा पति लेखै पाए ॥

(सिरी रागु, वार, सलोकु 3, पृ. 83)

जौ तूं ब्राह्मण ब्रह्मणी जाइआ ॥ तउ आन बाट काहे नही आइआ ॥

तुम कत ब्राह्मण हम कत सूद ॥ हम कत लोहू तुम कत दूध ॥

(बाणी कबीर, पृ. 324)

मुसलमाण कहावणु मुसकलु जा होइ ता मुसलमाणु कहावै ॥

अवलि अउलि दीनु करि मिठा मसकलमाना मालु मुसावै ॥

होइ मुसलिमु दीन मुहाणै मरण जीवण का भरमु चुकावै ॥

रब की रजःइ मने सिर उपरि करता मने आपु गवावै ॥

तउ नानक सरब जीआ मिहरंमति होइ त मुसलमान कहावै ॥

(रागु माझ, वार, सलोकु 13 पृ. 141)

सचु वरतु संतोखु तीरथु गिआनु धिआनु इसनानु ॥

दइआ देवता खिमा जपमाली ते माणस परधान ॥

जुगति धोती सुरति चउका तिलकु करणी होइ ॥

भाउ भोजन नानका विरला त कोई कोइ ॥

(रागु सारंग, वार, सलोकु 31 पृ. 1245)

राह दोवै इकु जाणै सोई सिझसी ॥ (राग माझ, वार पउड़ी 5 पृ. 142)

19. नीचा अंदरि नीच जाति नीची हू अति नीचु ॥

नानकु तिनकै संगि साथि वडिआ सिउ किया रीस ॥

जिथै नीच समालीअनि तिथै नदरि तेरी बखसीस ॥ (सिरी रागु, सबद 3.4 पृ. 15)

20. *History of Dharmashastra*, P.V. Kane (Vol. II, Part-I) p. / no. 624ff

'There is no vedic passage which can be cited as incontrovertibly referring to widow-burning as then current, nor is there any mantra (hymn) which could be said to have been repeated in very ancient times, at such burning nor do the ancient grhya-sutras contain any direction prescribing the procedure of widow-burning'.

21. *Ibid*, P.V. Kane, p. no. 69-103.

भारत में जाति प्रथा, हटन।

- 21(अ). ब्राह्मणोऽस्य मुखमासीद् बाहू राजन्यः कृतः।

ऊरू तदस्य यद्वैश्यः पद्भ्यां शूद्रो अजायत ॥ (ऋ 10.90.12)

अंतरि मैलु तीरथ भरमीजै ॥

मनु नही सूचा किआ सोच करीजै ॥

(रागु रामकली, असटपदीआं, पृ. 905)

22. चातुर्वर्ण्य मया सृष्टं गुणकर्मविभागशः। (गीता)

23. ब्रह्मणे ब्रह्मणम् क्षत्राय राजन्यम्। मरूद्भ्यो वैश्यं तपसे शूद्रम् ॥

24. ब्रह्मणो वैत राजन्यो ना वैश्यो वा ते हि यज्ञियाः न वै देवाः सर्वेणैव संबदन्ते।

ब्राह्मणेन वैव राजन्येन वा वैश्येन वा। ते हि यज्ञियाः। (श. ब्रा. 3.1.1.9-10)

25. उषस्तमश्यां यशसं सुवीरं दासप्रवर्गम् ..... ऋ

26. अरं दासो न मीडहुषे कराण्यहम्.....

27. प्रियं मा दर्म कृणु ब्रह्मराजन्याभ्यां शूद्राय चार्याय च।

28. प्रियं मा कृणु देवेषु प्रियं राजसु मा कृणु।

प्रियं सर्वस्य पश्यत उत शूद्र उतार्ये ॥ अथ (19.62.1)

29. नमस्तक्षभ्यो रथकारेभ्यश्च वो नमो

नमः कुलालेभ्यः कमरिभ्यश्च वो नमो।

नमो निषादेभ्यः पुञ्जिष्टेभ्यश्च वो नमो

नमः श्वनिभ्यो मृगयुभ्यश्च वो नमः ॥ (यजु 16.27)

30. शुनं न फाला वि कृषन्तु भूमिं  
शुनं कीनाशा अभियन्तु वाहैः  
शुनं पर्जन्यो मधुना पयोभिः  
शुनासीरा शुनमस्मायु धत्तम् ॥ (ऋ 4.57.8)
31. संगच्छध्वं संवदध्वं संवोमनांसि जानताम्  
समानो मन्त्रः समितिः समानी  
समानं मनः सहचित्तमेषाम् ।  
समानी व आकूतिः समाना हृदयानि वः ॥  
समानमस्तु वो मनो यथा वः सुसहासति ॥ (ऋ 10.791.2-4)
32. समानी प्रपा सह वोऽन्नभागः  
समाने योक्त्रे सह वो युनज्मि ॥ (अर्थ 3.30.6)  
आयुष्मन्तः सहभक्षाः स्याम (अर्थ 6.47.1)
33. मा नो हिंसीज्जनिता यः पृथिव्याः (ऋ)  
मा मा हिंसीज्जनिता यः पृथिव्याः यजुः
34. यतो यतः समीहसे ततो नो ऽ भय कुरु ।  
शनः कुरु प्रजाम्योऽभयं नः पशुभ्यः ॥ (यजुः)
35. राजे सीह मुकदम कुते ॥ जाइ जगाइन बैटे सुते ॥  
चाकर नहदा पाइन्हि घाउ ॥ रतु पितु कुतिहो चटि जाहु ॥ (रागु मलार वार पृ. 1288)
36. तखति राजा सो बहै जि तखतै लाइक होई ॥  
जिनी सचु पछाणिआ सचु राजे सेई ॥  
एहि भूपति राजे न आखीअहि दूजै भाइ दुखु होई ॥  
कीता किआ सालाहीऐ जिसु जादे बिलम न होई ॥ (मारु वार पृ. 1088)
- 36(अ). अश्मा भवतु नस्तनुः (ऋ 6.75.12)  
तेजोऽसि तेजो मयि धेहि, बलमसि बलं मयि धेहि  
मन्युरसि मन्यु मयि धेहि सहोसि सहो मयि धेहि (यजु 19.9)  
बलं धेहि तनूषु नो बलमिन्द्रानडुत्सु नः  
बलं तोकायतनयाय जीवसे त्वं हि बलदा असि । (ऋ 3.53.18)  
अस्मे क्षत्राय वर्चसे बलाय (ऋ 10.18.9)
37. पश्येम शरदः शतम् । जीवेम शरदः शतम् ।  
बुध्येम शरदः शतम् । रोहेम शरदः शतम् ।  
पूषेम शरदः शतम् । भवेम शरदः शतम् ।  
भूयेम शरदः । भूयसीः शरदः शतम् ॥ (अर्थ 19.67.1-8)
38. असपत्नः सपत्नहा .... (ऋ 10.174.5)  
ये नः सपत्ना अप ते भवन्तु (ऋ 10.128.9)  
मम पुत्राः शत्रुहणः .... (ऋ 10.139.2)
39. ऋषभं मा समानानां सपत्नानां विषासहिम् ।

हन्तारं शत्रूणां कृधि विराजं गोपतिं गवाम् ॥ (ऋ 10.166.1)

असपत्नः सपत्नहा (ऋ 10.174.32)

विश्वाः स्पृधो अभिमातीर्जयेम (ऋ 10.18.9)

प्रजामपत्यं बलमिच्छमानः (ऋ 1.179.6)

40. याहीं काज धरा हम जनमं ॥ समझ लेहु साधू सभ मनमं ॥  
धरम चलावन संत उबारन ॥ दुस्ट सभन को मूल उपारन ॥ (द. ग्र. सा.)
41. यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।  
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥ (गीता 4.7)  
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय सम्भवामि युगे युगे । (गीता)
42. १ ऊँ कार सति नाम करता पुरुखु निरभउ निरवैरू ॥  
अकाल मूरति अजूनी सैभं गुरुप्रयादि ॥ (जपु)  
आदि सचु जुगादि सचु । है भी सचु नानक होसीभी सचु ॥  
(जपुजी, पृ. 1)
43. आपे मारे आपे छोडै आपे लेवै देइ ॥  
आपे वेखे आपे विगसै आपे नदरि करे ॥ (राग आसा, पृ. 350)  
आपि मरै मारे भी आपि ॥ आपि उपाए थापि उथापि ॥  
(रागु आसा असटपदीआं, पृ. 413)  
आपि उपाए आपि खपाए ॥ आपे सिरि सिरि धन्धै लाए ॥ (रागु मारू सोलहे, पृ. 1020)
44. न तस्य प्रतिमा ऽस्ति । (यजुः 32.3)  
ततो भूयऽइव ते तमो य ऽउ सम्भूत्यां रताः (यजुः 40.9)
45. स पर्यगाच्छुक्रमकायम् । (यजुः 40.8)  
दिव्यो ह्यमूर्तः पुरुषः स बाह्याभ्यन्तरो ह्यजः ।  
अप्राणो ह्यमनाः शुभ्रो ह्यक्षरात् परतो परः ॥ (मु.उ. 1.2)
46. एकं सद् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति ।
47. तस्मिन् ह तस्थुर्भुवनानि विश्वा । (यजुः 31.19)
48. अपाणिपादो जवनो ग्रहीता पश्यत्यक्षुः स शृणोत्यकर्णः । सवेत्ति वेद्यं न च तस्यास्ति वेत्ता । तमाहुरग्रचं पुरुषं महान्तम् । (श्वे उ. 3.19 देखे 45)
49. न तस्य कार्यकरणं च विद्यते  
स कारणं करणाधिपाधिपो न चास्य कश्चिज्जनिता नचाधिपः । (श्वे उ. 6.8-9)
50. पुरुष एवेदं सर्वं यद्भूतं यच्च भाव्यम् । (यजुः 31.2)
51. न तत्र सूर्यो भाति न चन्द्रतारकम् नेमा विद्युतो भान्ति कुतोऽयमग्निः ।  
तमेव भान्तमनुभाति सर्वं तस्य भासा सर्वमिदं विभाति । (मु.उ. 2.10)
52. हुकमे आवै हुकमे जाइ ॥ आगै पाछै हुकमि समाइ ॥ (रागु गउड़ी, पृ. 151)  
हुकुमी होवनि आकार हुकमु न कहिआ जाई ॥  
हुकमी होवनि जीअ हुकुमि मिलै वडिआई ॥  
हुकमै अंदरि सभ को बाहरि हुकम न कोई । (जपु 2)

53. कंचन काइआ निरमल हंसु ॥ जिसु महि नामु निरंजन अंसु ॥ (रागु मलार, पृ. 1256)  
 सागर महि बूंद बूंद महि सागरु कवणु बुझै बिधि जाणै ॥ (रागु रामकली, पृ. 878)  
 सूचै भांडै साचु समावै बिरले सूचाचारी ॥  
 ततै कउ परमतंतु मिलाइआ नानक सरणि तुमारी ॥ (रागु सोरठि, पृ. 597)
54. परदारा परधनु परलोभा हउमै बिखै बिकार ॥ (रागु मलार, पृ. 1255)  
 राजु मालु रूपु जाति जोबनु पंजे ठग ॥  
 एनी ठगी जगु ठगीआ किनै न रखी लज ॥ (रागु मलार वार, पृ. 1288)
55. एना ठगन्हि ठग से जि गुर की पैरी पाहि ॥ (रागु मलार वार, पृ. 1288)
56. ऋ 1.39.3, अथ 6.42.2, 7.56.19 आचार्यदेवो भव तै.उ. 1.11  
 अज्ञान तिमिरान्धस्य ज्ञानांजनशलाकया ।  
 चक्षुरून्मीलितं येन तस्म श्रीगुरवे नमः ॥
57. बलिहारी गुर आपणे दिउहाड़ी सद वार ॥  
 जिनि माणस ते देवते कीए करत न लागी वार ॥ महला 1 ॥ (पृ. 462)
58. बाहू मे बलमिन्द्रियं हस्तौ मे कर्म वीर्यम् आत्मा क्षत्रमुरो मम ।
59. कृतं मे दक्षिण हरते जयो मे सव्य आहितः । (अर्थ 7.50.8)
60. अभयं नः करत्यन्तरिक्षमभयं द्यावापृथिवी उभे इमे । अभयं पश्चादभयं  
 पुरस्तादुत्तरादधरादभयं नो अस्तु । अभयं मित्रादभयममित्रादभयं ज्ञातादभयं परोक्षात् ।  
 अभयं नक्तमभयं दिवा नः सर्वा आशा मम मित्रं भवन्तु 19.15.9
61. इदमहमनृतात् सत्यमुपैमि यजु 1.5 सत्या मनसो मे अस्तु ऋ 10.128.4  
 सामा सत्योक्तिः परिपातु विश्वतः ऋ 10.37.2

# A STUDY OF SIKHISM IN BUDDHISTIC PERSPECTIVE WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE GURU GRANTH AND THE TIPITAKA

*Sanghasen Singh*

To follow the conventional pattern of studying historical events, traditions, ideas, beliefs and practices, the title should read 'The Tipitaka And the Guru Granth Sahib.' However as the main thrust of the Seminar is to put the Guru Granth in full focus and to evaluate its position among the scriptures of the world religions, the title has its justification. In view of this fact, the first task before the humble author of these lines is to discuss the state and nature of the Sikh Scripture, namely the Guru Granth Sahib and to present the structure and contents of the Tipitaka in the light of the same.

The word Tripitaka is a Sanskrit version of the original Pali word 'Tipitaka'. Since the 'Tipitaka', the Theravāda Scripture is purely in Pali, it would be proper to use Pali word, i.e. the 'Tipitaka' and not the Tripitaka. Secondly the Tipitaka is the title of the Scripture of the Theravādīs alone. Thus it should be noted that protagonists of other sects of Buddhism had named their Scriptures or Buddha-vacana-s (the words of Buddha) as Āgama Sūtra and so on. It is, therefore, proposed that the details of almost all Buddhist Scriptures should be given, with special emphasis on the Scripture of the Theravādi-s.

While writing the paper another problem has cropped up and that happens to be about inscribing the Pali, Sanskrit, Punjabi, Brajī and Avadhi words in Roman Script. To be fair to the tradition, I have decided to put Pali and Sanskrit words in internationally recognised Roman Script, while Punjabi, Brajī, Avadhi words in the popular type of the Roman Script.

Lastly it may be noted that in the present study only those points

than twenty centuries. Gautam Buddha, the founder and propounder of Buddhism was born in the 6th century B.C., while Guru Nanak, the first Guru, the Founder and the First propounder of Sikhism was born in the 15th century A.D. (1469 AD). There is a controversy about the date of birth and passing away of the Buddha,<sup>1</sup> but the majority of eminent scholars of Buddhist Studies, by and large, agree that he was born in the 6th century B.C. and passed away in the 5th century B.C. at the age of eighty. In view of this long gap, there is bound to be a divergence so far as the state, nature and contents of the two Scriptures are concerned.

To begin with, the composition of the Sikh Scripture begins with the emergence of Guruship in Guru Nanak in the year 1490 A.D. and closes with the passing away of the 10th Guru, i.e. Guru Gobind Singh in the year 1708 A.D. The Guruship was conferred on the Granth itself with the passing away of the last and the Tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh. Thus there ended Guruship in human form by the Tenth Guru and continued in the form of the Scripture (the Granth) thereafter. The period of the Guruship of the Scripture is unlimited and shall continue till the Sikh faith survive on the earth and under the sun.

While discussing the composition of the Scriptures of the Sikhs, the first thing that one has to ascertain is the authorship. In view of this fact it may be noted that the following constitute the authorship of the Granth :

- i. Six Sikh Gurus—The first five (Guru Nanak, Guru Angad, Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das and Guru Arjan Dev) and the Ninth/Tenth (Guru Teg Bahadur/Guru Gobind Singh).
- ii. Sixteen Bhagats<sup>2</sup> or Saints in chronological order are : Jai Dev (Bengal), Nam Dev (Bombay), Trilochan (Bombay),<sup>3</sup> Paramanand (Bombay), Sadna (Sindh), Beni (Uttar Pradesh), Ramanand (Uttar Pradesh), Dhanna (Tonk, Rajasthan), Pipa (Uttar Pradesh), Rai Das (Banaras, Uttar Pradesh), Farid (Western Punjab), Bhikhan (Uttar Pradesh) and Sur Das (Oudh, Uttar Pradesh).
- iii. There is a third category of the authors of the Granth which falls within the same period. It consists of the Bhattas whose compositions in the Granth are the panegyrics on the first



have been taken up and highlighted which give some idea of similarity or near similarity between the position taken by Gautam Buddha<sup>1</sup> and his early disciples on the one hand and Guru Nanak and the subsequent Guru-s on the other.

### **The Scriptures (The Guru Granth and The Tipiṭaka)**

To discuss Sikhism and Buddhism, their scriptures, texts, similarities and so on, it is essential to look into the background of their origin, their growth and their development. In this context, it may be noted that the historians of Indian religions speak of two streams of thought and culture that flourished side by side in ancient India—one was Śramaṇic and the other Brāhmaṇic. These were antagonistic to each other. Their antagonism was basically based upon their sense of survival. Hence they developed cutthroat rivalries for centuries and it may not be an exaggeration to state that that rivalry and antagonism are still alive in some form or the other. One may further notice that their respective positions have undergone changes as per the political, social and cultural conditions obtained during the past centuries right from the hey days of the Mohenjodero-Harappa to the contemporary period. In this context, Jainism, Buddhism and several other religious orders represent the ancient period of Indian religious history, Guru Nanak and several other saints of the Nirguṇa Pantha the medieval, while Narayan Guru, Jyotiba Phule, Periyar, Ambedkar, etc. the modern. It may be further noted that among the religious orders that played their roles in promoting the Śramaṇic stream of thought, the role of Buddhism and Sikhism is the most prominent. The Śramaṇic thought and culture in the hands of Buddhism flourished and expanded in India and abroad during ancient and the earlier part of medieval period, while Sikhism played the same role during the later medieval and modern period. It will be in the fitness of things here that their respective roles are brought to focus, so that the people at large may receive a fresh stimulus to revitalize the faiths (both Buddhism and Sikhism in their pristine purity) that gave/give solace to countless people in the past as well in the present and offer the bowl of hope for the period to come.

The Guru Granth and the Tipiṭaka, the main sources of the teachings of Sikhism and Buddhism respectively differ considerably. They originated in two different periods of time separated by a gap of more

five gurus. There is a controversy among the writers about the names and numbers of these Bhattas, but a close reading of their Savayyas reveals the 'fact that their number was seventeen. Their names are as under :

Mathra, Jalap, Bal, Harbans, Talya, Salya, Jalya, Bhal, Kalh Sahar, Kal, Jal, Nal, Kirat, Das, Gayand, Sadrang and Bhikha.

- iv. The list of the authors of the Granth does not end with the Bhattas alone. The holy Book contains Ramkali Sadd of Sunder, Hymns of Mardana and a long Poem—War of Satta and Balavanda.

Thus the number of hymns compiled in the Guru Granth Sahib happens to be 3384 (three thousand, three hundred and eighty four). Sizewise it amounts to three times of the bulk of the Rgveda. According to Fredric Pincott<sup>4</sup> the total number of stanzas happens to be 15,575 (fifteen thousand, five hundred and seventy five), out of which 6,204 (six thousand, two hundred and four) were written by the Fifth Guru, 2,949 (two thousand nine hundred and forty nine) by the First, 2,522 (two thousand, five hundred and twenty two) by the Third, 1,730 (one thousand, seven hundred and thirty) by the fourth, 196 (one hundred ninety-six) by the Ninth and 57 (fifty seven) by the Second Guru. Out of the rest of the stanzas the highest number is ascribed to Kabir and the lowest to Mardana.

It may also be noted here that the major compilation work of the Granth, by and large, came to an end in the year 1604 at Amritsar. The Guru told his Sikhs<sup>5</sup> that the Granth was the embodiment of the Gurus and should, therefore, be held in extreme reverence. Thus the Sikhs claim to own a most authenticated Book to rely upon. Macauliffe, who is considered as one of the most trusted authors on Sikh Scripture and Sikhism has made a very remarkable remark in this regard. His statement is worth quoting. It runs as under :

"The Sikh religion differs as regards the authenticity of its dogmas from most other great theological systems. Many of the great teachers the world has known have not left a line of their own composition, and we only know what they taught through tradition or second hand information. If Pythagoras wrote any of his tenets, his writings have not descended to us. We know the teaching of Socrates only through the writings of Plato and Xenophon. Budha

has left no written memorials of his teaching, Kung fu-tze, known to Europeans as Confucius, left no document in which he detailed the principles of his moral and social system. The founder of Christianity did not reduce his doctrine to writing, and for them we are obliged to trust to the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The Arabian Prophet did not himself reduce to writing the chapters of Quran. They were written or compiled by his adherents and followers. But the compositions of the Sikh Gurus are preserved, and we know at first hand what they taught.” (M.A. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. I, ‘Introduction’, pp. 52-53, S. Chand & Company Ltd. 1928, New Delhi).

The Granth got its title in A.D. 1604 when the task of compilation was completed. Guru Arjan called Sabad an embodiment of the Gurus. The title Guru was confirmed and ceremonially conferred on the Holy Book by the last Guru in 1708 A.D. at the time of his passing away<sup>6</sup>.

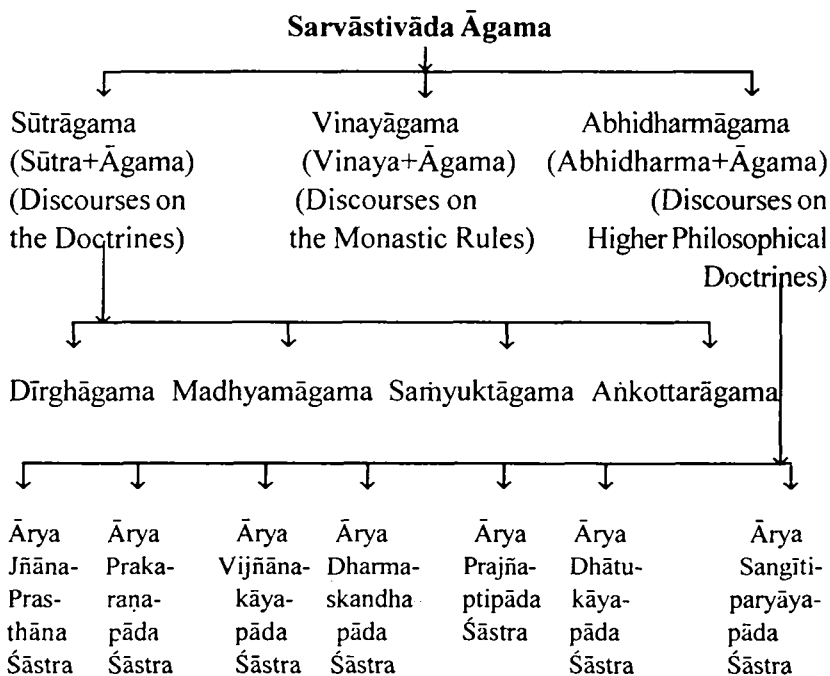
To a question why the Holy Book be called the Guru, the answer lies in the fact that it throws light on the path leading to the highest goal of spirituality. In this context a passage from the book entitled *Philosophy of Sikhism* may be very much relevant here :

Apart from this dogmatic belief it is called the Guru because it throws light on the path leading to the highest goal of spirituality. Its study serves as a guide. The Guru means one who throws light; guides in darkness. When the Guru is living bodily he guides his disciples by his words. At that time the auditory organs receive the stimuli. Now the same words are contained in the book and the task of receiving the stimuli is shifted from hearing to sight to visual organs of the reader or to the same auditory organs if one happens to be a listener to what is being read by the Granthi or the Kirtania—the singer of hymns.

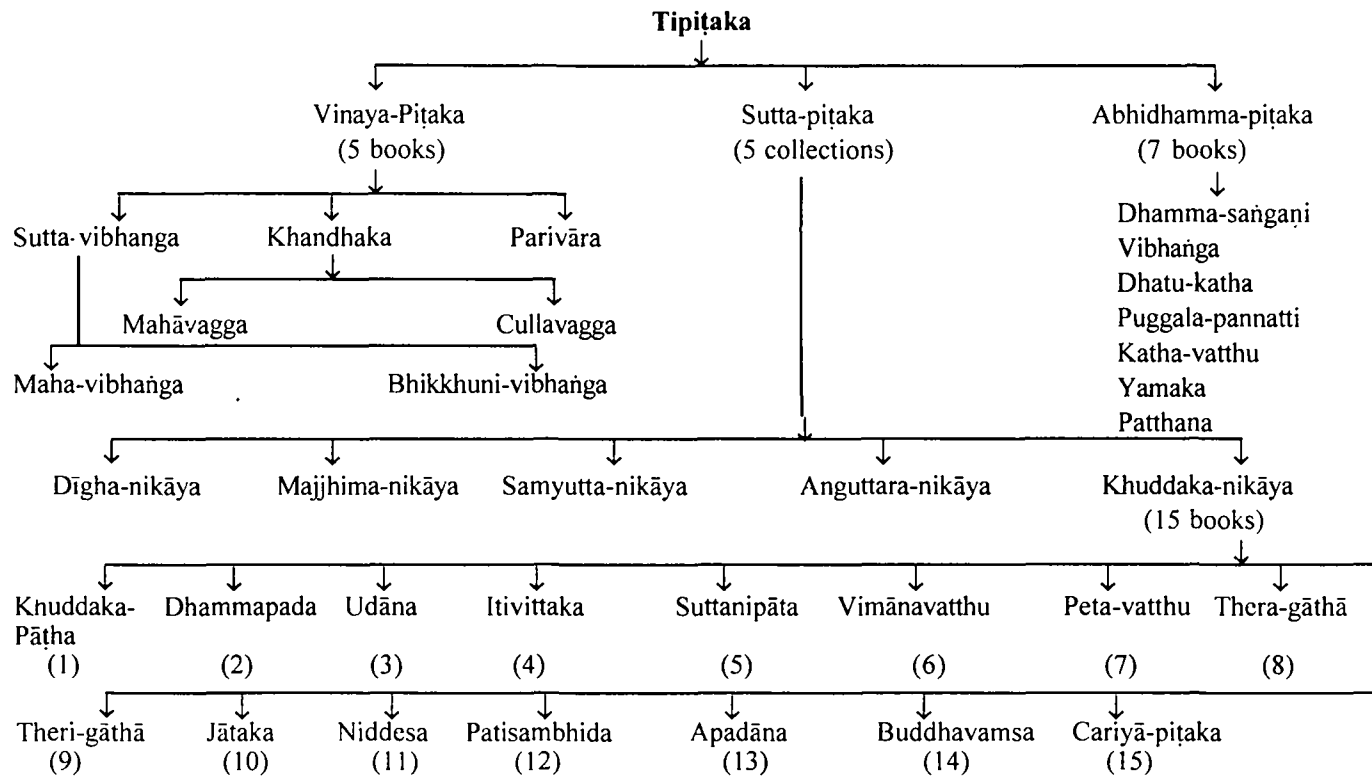
(Sher Singh, *Philosophy of Sikhism*, Amritsar: SGPC, 1993, p. 57.)

The Tipiṭaka (Sanskrit Tripiṭaka) is the sacred Scripture of the Buddhists. But to be precise it is the name of the Scripture of a few of the sects of Buddhism, particularly that of the Theravāda. The Sarvastivādīs and some others designated their Scripture or Tipiṭaka by the title ‘Āgama’. ‘Āgama’ literally means that which has come from the mouth of the Buddha (Ā+gama). Their ‘Agamas’ are divided into different sections in the same manner as that of the Tipitaka of the Theravāda itself. It may also be noted here that the Sarvāstivāda Scripture is lost in its original Sanskrit-Prakrit form, but is available in its

Chinese translation alone. To begin with the Scripture of the Sarvāstivādis, though chronologically their Scripture developed later. It may be shown by the following outline :

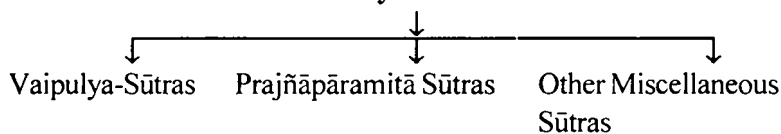


The early Theravādis had admitted several methods of categorisation of their Scripture. This had become imperative because of its vastness. Out of them, four has become the most popular. These are, Piṭaka-vasena (Piṭakawise), Nikāya-vasena (Nikāyawise), Aṅga-vasena (Aṅgawise) and Dhammakkhanda-vasena (Dhammakkhanda-wise). Again out of them, the division according to Piṭaka became the most popular among the monk-scholars. It runs as follows :



Historically speaking the Mahāyāna Scripture contains only those discourses which represent doctrinal aspects of the Buddha's teachings. It seems, the Mahāyāna Ācāryas did not bother to compile their own Vinayic Rule, instead they borrowed them from Sarvastivada, Dharmaguptaka and so on. As regards the Abhidharma, the same was absorbed in the Mahāyāna Sūtras in different forms the Mahāyānikas had collected and compiled a very large number of Sūtras but unfortunately most of them are lost in their original form. The Chinese and Tibetan translations of quite a good number of them are still available. The Mahāyāna Sūtras may be divided into three categories. These are as under :

### Mahāyāna-Sūtras



The Vaipulya-Sūtras are nine. These are as under :

1. Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra.
2. Saddharmapuṇḍarika Sūtra.
3. Latitavistara.
4. Saddharma-Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra.
5. Samādhirāja Sūtra.
6. Daśabhūmika Sūtra.
7. Suvarṇaprabhāsa Sūtra.
8. Tathāgataguhyaka.
9. Sukhāvati-vyūha.

Among the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras, the most important ones are :

Pañcavimsatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, Pañcavimsatyottara-śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra (which is bigger in size than the Mahābhārata of the Hindus), Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, Prajñāpāramitā Hṛdayā Sūtra and so on.

Among the third category of the Mahāyāna Sūtras, the names of the Kāraṇḍa-vyūha Sūtra, Sukhāvati-vyūha Sūtra, Śālistamba Sūtra etc. may be mentioned.

It may be further noted that there exists a sort of uniqueness in respect of the Buddhist scriptures. The Buddhists have several

scriptures. It is a known fact that Buddhism split into as many as eighteen sects (the number might have been even more) during king Asoka's time and thereafter. All those sects had their own Āgamas or Buddha-vacanās. Thus as many as eighteen Buddhist Scriptures existed at that time. But later in course of time, most of those scriptures ceased to exist. Only a few survived. The main among them were those of the Theravāda and the Sarvāstivāda. It is believed that king Ashoka had provided some sort of patronage to these two alone. As regards the Mahāsāṅghikas only a handful of the texts of their scripture is available today. Most of them are lost. Among the extant ones are some Vinaya texts like the Mahāsāṅghika Prātimokṣa Sūtra, Bhikṣuṇīvinaya and so on.

### **Some points of near similarity**

Gautam Buddha and Guru Nanak though flourished in two different periods (a gap of more than twenty centuries—Buddha's birth in the 6th century B.C., while that of Guru Nanak in the 15th century AD) yet had many common points, which are glaring enough to be noticed by any discerning and careful student of the scriptures bequeathed by them.

### **1. Use of the Dialect/Language of the Common Man**

The first and the foremost among those common points is the use of the common man's dialect, its idioms and phrases in their respective discourses. The Buddha is reported to have used Māgadhī Dialect/language (the original name of Pali) which was commonly spoken by the people of Magadha and the adjoining regions. According to the scriptural records<sup>7</sup>, he (the Buddha) rejected the suggestion of two of his disciples who hailed from a priestly Brāhmaṇa family of Puruṣapura (now Peshawar in Pakistan) to allow them to render his (Buddha's) words into Chāṇḍasa (Vedic dialect/language). Thus it is very clear that the Buddha wanted his message and ideas to be circulated freely among the common people of his time. Obviously it was possible only through the common dialects and languages of the people. He did not want that his teachings should be confined to a section alone. Guru Nanak too pursued the same path and policy and carried his message to the people through the common dialects of the people of his period. He delivered his discourses using the idioms and phrases of the people and composed his hymns in the spoken dialects of the common man. Like the Buddha Guru Nanak too was not enamoured of the scholastic

language of the priestly and elite class and remained contented with the lingua franca of his period.

## 2. Complete Disregard for forms and Rituals

The Buddha did not prescribe any particular form for the faith that he established, nor to the set of beliefs and practices that he prescribed. Any body can/ could enter his order if he fulfilled/ fulfills certain conditions. For instance, one should be of twenty years age at the time of his entry to the order of monks and nuns. After the acceptance of noviceship or membership of the order he has to forego the layman's dress and wear the prescribed robe of a Buddhist mendicant called a *bhikkhu* (Sanskrit *bhikṣu*). On the other hand for those who opt to lead the life of a laity, for them there exists no prescribed robe. For the attainment of the purification or emancipation one has to follow the path of good conduct and human virtues. In so doing one can achieve the essence of dhamma, and thus reach the state of all pervading dhamma, but at the same time on reaching that stage he can even forego dhamma as he proceeds to the higher stage of spirituality. Foregoing dhamma at that stage has been likened by the Buddha with casting off a raft of wood after crossing the stream. In that context, a wise man does never get enamoured of the raft and carry it over his head. So is the case with dhamma and adhamma gets thrown out in the life of the practitioner much earlier.<sup>8</sup>

The Buddha despised any sort of rituals for his disciples. In fact, he considered rituals a hindrance to the path of spirituality, purification (*visuddhi*) or emancipation (*nibbāna/mokkha*, *Skt. nirvāṇa/mokṣa*). He asked his disciples to shun ten saṃyojanas or fetters which cause obstructions in their path of spirituality. One of them which is relevant to the present discussion at the moment is called Silabbata-parāmāsa (Sanskrit Śīlavṛta-parāmāśa) or ritualism. The ten saṃyojanas are so important to the Buddhist practitioner that he fails to achieve nibbāna or liberation, if he does not overcome them completely. The silabbata-parāmāsa has been enlisted by the Buddha in the first group of saṃyojanas for their removal and if he does, not remove it, he cannot reach even the first stage of sanctification known as the Sotāpatti Magga/ Phala (the stage of stream reachership).

Guru Nanak, too was opposed to the prescription of any form or



ritual in spiritual matters. The path prescribed by him was neither Karma Marga, nor Gyan Marga (Sanskrit *jñāna Mārga*), nor even the traditional Hindu Bhakti Marga, but simply Nam Marga which on the theoretical side may be called aesthetic idealism and on its practical side it lays emphasis on aesthetic communion and its result *wismad* or wonder.<sup>9</sup>

### 3. The Idea of Universal Brotherhood

The Buddha stood for the unity and brotherhood of the whole humankind. He considered man at the centre of all religious and spiritual pursuits and therefore, he viewed manhood far superior to even the so-called divine beings. According to him the attainment of Buddhahood is possible only when one is born as a human being. The Buddhist texts<sup>10</sup> depict gods as those who were extremely keen that Buddhisattva Siddhattha was born as a man in the world of desires or *Kāmaloka*. They thought/that only the Bodhisattva can show the path of liberation to the people of the *Kāmadhātu*.

Guru Nanak too taught the path of universal brotherhood. Equipped with all sorts of lofty ideas about human brotherhood from Buddhism, Islam and so on which had percolated deep into the minds of the people of his period through all available sources, Guru Nanak was quick enough to draw them and adopt them suitably and to give them a brighter shape in order to make them reach the lowest of the low of his times. The so-called lowest born were the main beneficiaries of his re-vitalised ideas and practices.

### 4. The Purity of Heart and the Good Moral Conduct

Though the concept, method, content, state and nature of liberation as depicted in the *Tipiṭaka* and the *Guru Granth* differ considerably, yet the initial and basic path to its achievement happens to be similar, if not identical. The first and the foremost requisite to that attainment is good conduct which the Buddha calls as *sīla* (Sanskrit *śīla*). The Buddha was so emphatic about its position that he considered it as the base of all religious and spiritual attainments. According to a couplet of the *Dhammapada*, non-committing sins, performing moral deeds and controlling one's own mind happen to be the three fundamental teachings of the Buddha.<sup>11</sup>

Guru Nanak's emphasis on purity of heart and good conduct has become by and large proverbial in the post-Nanak Indian society. His

words in this regard have not only gone into the making of Sikh moral philosophy, but have influenced religious ideas of the fellow religions as well.

### 5. The Organic character of the Sikh Sangat and the Buddhist Saṅgha

The Buddha established the order of Monks (Bhikkhu-saṅgha) and subsequently the order of Nuns (Bhikkhunī-saṅgha) in order to carry forward his ideas of religious pursuits. The Sikh Sangat appears to have moulded itself partly on the lines of the Saṅgha, while those who joined the Sikh Sangat were householders pure and simple, the members of the Buddhist order were homeless recluse and mendicants. The establishment of the Khalsa Panth during the period of the last Guru, i.e., Guru Gobind Singh was also on almost the same lines as the Saṅgha, where no distinction was made from man to man. The only fact that every aspirant had to accept was to fulfill the conditions laid down for entry by the leaders of the respective organisations. The Buddha and the Guru were keen to hold the Saṅgha and the Khalsa respectively to be distinguishable from the general mass of people. The Buddha did it through the prescription of the Patimokkha Rules (227 for monks and 311 for nuns according to the Theravāda), while the Guru by prescribing special behaviour (*niara*) and appearance (*raham-rahāt*)

### 6. The Equality of Humankind

The Buddha believed and taught that all human beings are born equal. He did not accept any hierarchy among them. He opposed the Varṇa System of Brāhmaṇism and opened the door of purification (Visuddhi) and liberation (Nibbāna) to all without any distinction. It may also be noted in this context that he happens to be the first religious and spiritual teacher in the entire history of India to have given the slogan of the Cātuvāṇṇapārisuddhi (Purification of the people belonging to all the four varṇas). Prior to him no Sudda (Skt. Śūdra), nor any Atisudda (Skt. Atiśūdra) and Milakkha (Skt. Mleccha) was allowed to pursue religious path—austerities (tapah/topasyā), Vedic sacrifices, renunciation (nekkhamma, nekkhamaṇa Skt. naiṣkramya, naiṣkramaṇa) and so on for the attainment of their purification leading to liberation. In this context, he rejected the claim of the Brāhmaṇas that they alone are born superior. A false and pernicious view was being propagated by the Brāhmaṇas

of his period that the Brāhmaṇas are born from the mouth of the supreme Deity (Brahmā) and the rest of the humanity was born low. Rubbishing and ridiculing the claim of the Brāhmaṇas, the Buddha told his disciples that the claim was baseless and bogus as the Brāhmaṇa women are seen sharing bed with men, conceiving, giving birth to children biologically in the same manner as woman of the other varṇas do, suckling their infants and so on. Thus the Buddha rejected superiority of any person on the basis of his/her birth. Instead he established a rational, reasonable and logical yardstick to measure the relative superiority of a man. It was/is on the basis of one's good conduct to which every individual has an access by way of his/her rights. In the Vasala Sutta he emphatically declared :

Na jaccā Vasalo hoti na jaccā hoti Brāhmaṇo,

Kammunā Vasalo hoti kammunā hoti Brāhmaṇo<sup>12</sup>

(None is a Vasala by birth, nor any one is Brāhmaṇa by birth. One becomes a Vasala by one's deeds and likewise one becomes a Brāhmaṇa by his deeds).

Guru Nanak and all medieval saints of the Nirguṇa Pantha had spoken in one voice that no one was born superior, nor anyone inferior. Saint Kabir whose hymns and couplets have been profusely incorporated and compiled in the Guru Granth Sahib, has echoed almost the same idea as the one spoken by the Buddha and quoted above.

## 7. The Buddha and the Guru

Almost all schools of thought in Buddhism admit stages of sanctification. The Theravāda Buddhism gives utmost importance to the pursuit of Nibbāna or Arahantaship (Skt. Arhatship). One becomes an Arahanta by way of removing Akusala Dhammas (Skt. Akuśala Dharmas, immoral elements—Rāga/Lobha or Attachment, Dosa, Skt. Dveṣa or Avarice and Moha or Ignorance or infatuation) and the ten Saṃyojanas (fetters) as stated above. By following the method set by the Buddha, one first attains the stage of Sotāpatti (Skt. Śrota āpatti or Stream-reacher), then Sakadāgāmī (Skt. Sakrādāgāmī or once-returner), Anāgāmī (Non-returner) and Arahanta (Perfect or liberated Being) one after the other. The attainment Arhantaship or the liberation or the Sumum Bonum of life).

Side by side with the aforesaid stages of sanctification, there is another model in Buddhism. In this model, the attainment of Arahantaship

is considered inferior type of spiritual goal and instead a higher goal is set by the practitioner and that happens to be Buddhahood. This was done by the Mahāyāna Ācāryas or Masters who thought that the real spirit of the Buddha's teachings lies in the attainment of Buddhahood, rather in the achievement of mere Arhantship. This led to the origination and growth of an all pervading doctrine of Bodhisttvahood. According to the teachings of the Mahāyāna Scripture, every sentient being has the potentiality of becoming a Buddha in one birth or several births, rather innumerable births. But technically speaking Bodhisattva is one who is involved in Bodhisattva practices (Caryās) after making a resolution (Prajñidhāna) to attain Bodhi (Enlightenment) or Buddhahood and after developing Bodhi-citta or Bodhi-consciousness.

Proceeding further to the era of Vajrayāna/ Kālacakrayāna one finds another stage known as Lama. This stage has some similarity with the stage of Gurus of different religious orders of the medieval period barring that of Sikhism. The Guru in Sikhism is on a different footing. But, by and large, it may be observed that the position of Guru has been elaborated to a very high position as compared to what it was in earlier religious orders including Buddhism.<sup>13</sup> In certain matters the importance of 'Guru' was felt far more higher than what it is found in normal usage. A couplet by a medieval saint testifies this fact :

Guru Gobind doū khare Kāke lāgauñ pañva,  
Balihari una gurun ki jin Gobind dayo lakhāya.

(Finding the Guru and the God in front of himself, the practitioner thinks whom to bow first. (He bows to the former first) thinking it a great obligation from the former who made him see the God.)

A distinction has been made by the present author between the Guru in Sikhism and that of other medieval religions like Kabir-Panth, Dadu-panth, Namdev-panth and so on. It is because of the fact that Sikhism grew into an institutionalized religion over the centuries, whereas the other religions of the medieval period could not grow to that extent. In Buddhism any body can aspire to become a Buddha and may attain that position in countless births.

Lastly, if permitted to use one's musings, can the Sikh Gurus particularly Guru Nanak, the first one be considered a Bodhisattva or for that matter a Bodhisattva-Mahāsattva? In the considered opinion of

the present author, he was certainly a Bodhisattva of the highest order, in spite of the fact that the Sikhs believe that Guru Nanak have the highest divinity to his credit and he himself believed in one God—a Creator and All-pervading one. The Buddhahood is achieved on the basis of the attainment of the perfection of Virtues (Pāramitās)<sup>14</sup> rather than on any other consideration.

## REFERENCES AND NOTES

1. The Buddhist tradition holds that there existed Buddhas prior to Gautam Buddha. At least 28 (twenty eight) of them have been mentioned by name in the Buddhist scriptures. But none of them has been proved to be historical personage so far. It might have been due to the tendency of transhistoricity among the religions that the early Buddhists floated the names of the Buddhas prior to Gautama Buddha. Thus the foundership positively lies with Śākyamuni Buddha alone.
2. Cf. Singh, Sher, *Philosophy of Sikhism*, SGPC, Amritsar, 4th Edition, 1998.
3. According to some other scholars, there were only fourteen Bhagats. The names of Parmanand (Bombay) and Meera Bai (Rajasthan) are dropped from the list. Cf. Dr. Narang as quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 49.
4. The Article in J.R.A.S., Vol. XVIII, Calcutta as quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 50.
5. Compare the usage of the words sekha and asekha in Buddhist scripture. The sekha is one who is in the process of learning, while asekha is the perfect Being. The derivation of these words may be traced with root śikṣ and not with the word śiṣya as some authors here tried to show.
6. Compare with the words of the Buddha when he asked his disciples to hold Dhamma taught by him as their Teacher or Satthā (Skt. śāstā) after his demise. See Mahaparivibbāna Sutta.
7. See the Cullavagga, the story of Yameḷa and Yameḷaka brothers who proposed to the Buddha to render his (Buddha's) words into Chāndasa. He rejected their proposal and gave a ruling : Anujānāmi bhikkhave, sakāya niruttīyā Buddha-vacanāṃ Pariyāpūṇitūṃ (I allow you O monks, to learn the Buddha's words into one's own dialect).
8. Alagaddūpama Sutta and Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra 'Dhammā eva pahātabbā pageva adhammā.'
9. See Singh, Sher, *Philosophy of Sikhism*, P. 51.
10. Cf. Lalitvistara, Nidānakathā, etc.
11. Sabba-pāpassa akaraṇaṃ kusalassa upasampadā  
Sacitta-pariyodapanaṃ etaṃ Buddhāna sāsanaṃ—From Dhammapada
12. Cf. The Vasala Sutt, The Suttanipāta of the Khuddaka-nikāya.
13. Guru (The spiritual teacher) in medieval religious orders was very commonly used. In Buddhism it took the form of Kalyāṇa-mitra (Spiritual Guide). The

Buddhist order establishes to officers from amongst the Bhikkhus (monks) themselves one was an Ācariya (Skt. Ācārya) and the other Upājjhāya (Skt. Upādhyāya).

14. As many as ten Pāramitā-s have been recognised by the Theravādi-s, while the Mahāyāni-s by and large stick to six only. These are as under : Dāna, Śīla, Naiṣkramya, Vīrya, Utsāha and Prajñā. The set of Pāramitā-s or Pāramī-s according to the Theravādi-s happens to be : Dāna, Śīla, Nekkhamma, Paññā, Viriya, Khanti, Sacca, Adhiṭṭhāna, Mettā and Upekkhā. A Bodhisattva has to practice these Pāramitā-s all together by and large and has to reach the point of perfection in each case. Reaching that stage heralds the attainment of Bodhi or Buddhahood. In Mahāyāna an element of ten Bhūmi-s has also been added. The Bodhisattva has to pass through them in order to become a Samyak-sambuddha (The Perfectly Enlightened One).

The Ten Bhūmis are as follows :

1. Pramuditā (the Stage of Supreme Delight),
2. Vimalā (the Stage of Exemption from Defilements),
3. Prabhākāri (the Stage of Spiritual Illumination),
4. Arciṣmatī (the Stage of Spiritual Radiance),
5. Sudurjayā (the Stage of Immensely Difficult Victory),
6. Abhimukhī (the Stage of the Predominance of Transcendental Wisdom),
7. Durañamā (the Stage of Rarefaction),
8. Acatā (the Stage of Preclusion of Retrogression),
9. Sādhumatī (the Stage of Goodness or the Accomplishment of Different Varieties of Dharma),
10. Dharma-meghā (the Stage of the Cloud of Doctrine).

# THE HOLY QUR'AN AND SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB : SIMILARITIES AND DISTINCTIONS

*I. H. Azad Faruqi*

The Holy Qur'an and The Guru Granth Sahib, both occupy a central place in the respective traditions, which they belong to, namely, Islam and Sikhism. Although, apparently, there may be differences in the ways and manners in which both the scriptures have been relied upon and served as the basis for the growth and development of the two traditions, but there is little doubt that they serve as the pivot for the whole religious system of the traditions they belong to. Even a cursory study of the role of these scriptures in their traditions and their content reveals that both contain remarkable similarities, in spite of meaningful distinctions, which, determine their distinctive characters.

In a modest attempt to look at the Holy Qur'an and the Guru Granth Sahib, side by side, let us start with their religio-spiritual status, in their respective traditions. The Holy Qur'an, for instance, is considered by the Muslims as the speech of God, revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and dictated by him to be written down by his companions. It should be clear that it is not only the truths and teachings contained in the Holy Qur'an, which are believed to be a result of the Divine authorship, but it is the very text, the words and the composition itself, which are considered to have their source in the Almighty God. The Qur'anic view of God in general emphasizing the transcendental aspect of God more than His immanent aspect, a point which we may discuss in some detail later, leaves no room for any representation of God which can be perceptible through senses. In the absence of any such material support for imagination and experience to come in contact with God, the text of the Holy Qur'an remains the only thing, for a common Muslim, which, being the speech of God, is a Divine attribute, and yet within the field of sensual experience and even tangible in written

and bound form. Thus, the Holy Qur'an for Muslims exudes a divine presence, which is not comparable by any other thing in this world. By reciting the Holy Qur'an, whether in its book form or from memory after learning it by heart, whether in the sessions of Namaz, the Muslim ritual prayer, or outside it, the door is always open for a believer to come in contact with the Divine presence, as much as possible.

The case of the Guru Granth Sahib is similar to that of the Holy Qur'an, though there may be differences in detail. According to the Sikh belief the ten human Gurus at the onset of Sikh history, in spirit were one with God and shared in His essence. The Guru Granth Sahib as the Guru of the Sikhs since the time of the Tenth Guru, has the same quality of being the "visible form of Divine Essence". According to late Professor Gurubachan Singh Talib in his introduction to the English translation of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Bhai Nand Lal in his *Rahitnama* has explained the Sikh belief on Divine being in three forms : (1) Nirguna (2) Saguna and (3) as Guru-Shabd, which is the form embodied in the Guru Granth Sahib. Thus, for Sikhs, who also like Muslims, believe in a transcendental concept of God, but in their own style, which would be discussed later, Guru Granth Sahib contains and imparts the Divine Presence in a much more living and intense form than does the Holy Qur'an for the Muslims. This is because the Holy Qur'an being *Kalam-e-Ilahi*, the speech of God is the visible form of only an attribute of God, a something of God in this world, while Guru Granth Sahib being united with *Akal Purukh* in His very essence, represents the Divinity for the Sikhs in a more intense and total form. Hence, the centrality of the Guru Granth Sahib in ritual worship of the Akal Purukh, as well as, in the whole religious system of the Sikh tradition, is quite understandable.

Islam and Sikhism, both are monotheistic religions and the Holy Qur'an and Sri Guru Granth Sahib, being the foundations of the two traditions, contain a monotheistic concept of God. Although both the scriptures abound in teachings, statements and phrases describing their particular concept of God, there are pieces of Texts in them where it is asserted in a more direct and clear-cut form. *Surah Ikhlas* in the case of the Holy Qur'an and *Mool Mantra* in Guru Granth Sahib, are two such places. Both compositions are economical in words, but terse,



condensed and loaded with meanings.

*Surah Ikhlas* runs as follows :

Say : He is Allah,  
The One;  
Allah, the Eternal, Absolute;  
He begetteth not,  
Nor is He begotten:  
And there is none  
Like unto Him.

*Mool Mantra* in the English translation as given in *Hymns of Guru Nanak*, published by the Language Department, Punjab in 1972, is rendered thus :

There is but one God.  
True is His Name, creative His Personality  
and immortal His form. He is without fear, sans enmity,  
unborn and self-illuminated.  
By the Guru's grace He is obtained.

There being little doubt about the monotheistic nature of the concept of divinity in both the traditions of Islam and Sikhism, there still may be seen a slight difference of emphasis in the case of the concept of God in the Holy Qur'an and Guru Granth Sahib. The transcendence and immanence are two aspects of the One God, Allah or Akal Purukh, believed in Islam and Sikhism and described in detail in the Holy Qur'an and Sri Guru Granth Sahib. However, after reading the two scriptures to some extent, it may be noticed that though both aspects of God has been mentioned in both the scriptures, yet there appears to be more emphasis on the transcendental aspect of God in the Holy Qur'an than on His quality of being immanent. While in the case of Sri Guru Granth Sahib it may be found that while acknowledging the transcendental aspect of God in its own right, it is the immanent aspect of God, which has been given a precedence and is the most often repeated and described dimension of Godhead. This difference of emphasis on these two aspects of the One True God in these two scriptures, might be the reason behind the difference in the over all conceptualization of the person of God and a devotees relationship with Him, which may be observable to a reader of these two great scripture..

This emphasis on the transcendental aspect of God in the Holy Qur'an may be seen as a logical accompaniment of the concept of

Almighty God as the Majestic Lord and Master, as an Omnipotent King, which is the usual projection of the image of God in the Holy Qur'an. It is not that the Holy Qur'an lacks in the description of the merciful and benevolent aspects of God. There is the often-repeated description of the kindness, compassion and mercy of Allah towards creatures as a whole and towards man in particular. A number of verses of the Holy Qur'an enumerate Allah's bounties and favours upon mankind, and even His friendship and special relationship with His devotees and believers. But, when viewed as a whole, it is the majestic image of God as Lord and Master of the Universe, the Creator, the Nourisher and above all as the strict Taskmaster who will punish the wrong doers and reward the meritorious with an exacting justice, which appears to dominate in the Qur'an. In contrast to this royal and stately concept of God in the Qur'an, which seems to highlight the difference between the Creator and the creatures, in Sri Guru Granth Sahib, it is the friendly and benevolent aspect of God, His kindness, mercy, in short His loveable qualities, His closeness to man, which appears to have been given a prominence over His Lordship and Majesty.

This slight difference in the emphasis on the description of the various qualities of the One True God in the Holy Qur'an and Sri Guru Granth Sahib, as mentioned above, may also has to do, to some extent, with the circumstances and the milieu in which the two scriptures were revealed or composed. The seventh century Arabia, where wild tribes roamed in a stateless situation, each of them being a law unto itself and at a very elementary stage of culture or civilization, was very different from medieval India. In the medieval Indian conditions both the state and society, however oppressive and however corrupt and irreligious, have had their well established structures. The main task before the Bhaktas and early Gurus, in such circumstances, seems to have been to bring people to realize God as the living Reality and as the only worthy goal of human life. To encourage mankind to become *Gurmukh* i.e. to get their heart, mind and actions submerged in God-consciousness. In the case of the Qur'an also there was this purpose before it to awaken in human soul its forgotten relationship with Allah, the only truly existent Reality. But in its case it had an additional necessity of forging a state and society through the quos of the tribal life in an area, which has

never witnessed the structure of a political state before Islam. Hence, the much more authoritarian stance of the Deity in the Qur'an and the need of the legal injunctions and commandments, which sometimes can be with minute details, as in the case of the law of inheritance.

It may be noted, however, that the difference observed in the Holy Qur'an and Sri Guru Granth Sahib with regard to the emphasis between the transcendental and the immanent or the majestic and the benevolent aspects of God, stand bridged and compensated, if we take the later development of Sufi thought and practice, in the Muslim tradition, into account. As it is, the development of Sufi tradition within Islam, which ultimately grew to become the overwhelmingly dominating influence throughout the medieval period and which has been only partially challenged by some modern movements among the Muslims in the present times, can be seen as a natural growth of the spiritual vision of the Islamic tradition. It has been seen, as indeed it has always claimed to be, as based on the proper interpretation of the Holy Qur'an, which should be in consideration with its spiritual aims and objectives. Consequently, when the establishment of a state and society on the basis of the teachings of the Qur'an has been achieved, the conscience of the community naturally started to discover further implications of the religious and spiritual vision of the Qur'an. Such aspects of the Qur'anic teachings that bore spiritual content were more highlighted and the whole religious message of the Holy Qur'an and Islamic tradition came to be interpreted from this point of view.

It is noteworthy that not only in the visualization of the Person of God and the proper approach of man towards Him, but, in the concept of the goal of human life and the methods to be adopted in this regard, there is amazing similarity between the Sufi thought and practice and the teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. This may be because the religious teachings of the Holy Qur'an being interpreted through Sufi approach affirmed the same Truth as acquired independently by the Sikh Gurus and Bhaktas.

## GURU GRANTH SAHIB : A MUSLIM PERCEPTION

*Akhtarul Wasey*

Islam and Sikhism have two points of contact; one leading to confrontation and the other resulting in sharing of experience and vision. These two mutually contradictory Islamic responses to Guru Nanak's religion are quite puzzling and remain so till one tries to penetrate the surface of the historical reality of the time when Guru Nanak started his mission and examines the various processes that went into the making of the Islamic mind and society at that time.

Muslims had by that time consolidated their political power in India. Mughal empire was firmly in saddle. As Muslims became politically powerful their elites started alienating themselves not only from the local people but also their own co-religionist, of lower descent. They were now more a cultural community than a religious one, with their own distinct identity, only a part of which had something to do with the essence of Islam. These elites which included the royal class, the aristocracy and the ulema, represented what is called the exteriorist face of Islam which laid excessive emphasis on the letter rather the spirit of the Islamic faith. It was this exteriorist face of Islam that came in confrontation with the new faith of Sikhs. On the contrary, there were Sufis who strictly adhered to the inner core of Islam and exemplified and preached the Islamic message of unity of God and unity of Man and universal human brotherhood. Always maintaining a safe distance from the ruling elite and at times in open confrontation with them, these Sufis freely mingled with the people of different faiths, wore their dresses, ate their food and spoke their languages, for they had realised that the difference of faiths and religious practices was just a veil of ignorance that hid from the undiscerning eyes the essential oneness of the Absolute Being. That's why when Guru Nanak said 'There is no Hindu, there is no Muslim' the exteriorist Islamic quarters frowned

upon it while the Sufi had no problem as it was their own opinion expressed in different words.

Guru Nanak's teachings have many striking features which bring them closer to Islam. These are : belief in one God, at once transcendental and immanent, the God of all mankind which can not be represented by any physical symbol; the equality of all human beings; the togetherness of the spiritual and the worldly life, an organised community life based on sharing and *zikr*, remembrance of God as a form of prayer. Guru Nanak was a staunch monotheist. He set himself firmly against the idea of associating any other being with the Absolute Supreme Reality, which is also one of the fundamental articles of faith in Islam. For Guruji the Supreme Being was a universal, all-embracing, all-powerful, omniscient, all merciful God. The Adi Granth says :

The one God is the Father of all.

We are all his Children.

O Guru, O friend, I dedicate my heart to thee.

Let me but have a glimpse of God.

(Sorath, M. 5, Page 611)

At other place it affirms that;

The one Lord is the cause of all causes

Knowledge, wisdom, discrimination are

His gifts to us

He is not far, He is not near, He is with us all

Saith Nanak : Praise the Lord with abiding awe.

In Quran we find the same descriptions about the attributes of God :

Allah : there is no God but Him. The Living, the Eternal one. Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him. His is what the heavens and the earth contain... He knows about the affairs of men at present and in the future... His throne is as vast as the heavens and the earth .... He is Exalted, the Immense one. (2.255)

Belief in the oneness of God and polytheism and idolatry can not go hand in hand. Adi Granth denounces idolatry in these words :

You trample one piece of stone under your feet, and then worship a god made of the same stone. If the idol is God, the other stone must also be God. (Gujri, Namdev, p. 525)

It also says;

Those who consider stone images to be God, their worship is wasted.

Those who fall at the feet of the stone idol, their prayers and services are futile. My God ever speaks to me and He hears my prayers. He bestows gifts on His devotees. The stone image neither speaks nor does it give anything. All worship and adoration of the idols end in nothing.

The same ideas one finds in the Quran :

You worship idols besides Allah and invent falsehood. Those whom you serve besides Him can give you no provision. Therefore seek the bounty of Allah and worship Him. (29 : 17)

All attributes of God mentioned in the *Mool Mantra* are also there in the Quran. *Ek* is *ahad*, *Sat Nam* is *Al-Haq*, *Karta* is *Khaliq*, *Purakh* is *Nafs*, *Akal Murat* is *Hayy-o-La yamoot*. *Ajuni* is *Lam Yalid wa lam yulad*, *Nirbhay* is *La Yakhaafu*, *Nirwair* is *La Yazlim*, *Gur* is *Hadi*. This parallelism is not confined to the *Mool Mantra*. It could cover the whole of Guru Granth Sahib.

In Sikhism there is the same emphasis on the name of God as one finds in the Quran on *Asma-ul Husna* of Allah. *Nam Simran* is nothing different from *Wazkuru isma Rabbik* (remember the name of thy Lord). The *Ek Onkar* of Sikhs or Allah of Islam, who has both positive and negative attributes, can be realised through various ways and means. He can be approached through meditation and knowledge as in *gyan marg* which is the case with the impersonal *Nirgun Brahma* of the Vedanta. On the other hand He can also be realised through prayers which are not only formal but also in the form of remembrance of God's name. This is *simran* in Sikhism and *zikr* in Islam. Quran calls those true devotees who remember God standing, sitting and in their beds (*fazkurullah qiyaman wa quoodan wa ala junubihim*) (4 : 103). The importance attached to the Word as Name in Sikhism is manifested by the fact that the word Naam occurs 5999 times in the *Adi Granth*. There are two types of names. There are *Kritam Nam* which describe the attributes of God. Then there are true names (*Satsi nam*) which come out of a personal experience of the Divine Being. *Vahguru* "wonderful art-thou, Enlightener of the soul" is such a name which encapsulates the defining mystic experience in Sikh religious discipline. In the *Adi Granth* the true name has been mentioned as *vada nam*, *ucha nam*, *eknam*, *gurmat nam*, *amrit nam*, *gurmukh nam*, *nirbhau nam*, *nirmal nam*, *abinasi nam*, *nirgun nam*, *niranjan nam*, etc.

Islam exhorts the faithful that only faith in God or prayers or remembering His name is not enough. Faith must be accompanied with and proved by good deeds, *amal-e-saleh*. The Quran Says :

But those who embrace the faith and do good works are the noblest of all creatures. Allah will reward them with the Gardens of Eden, gardens watered by running streams where they shall dwell for ever. (98 : 8)

Guru Nanak says :

True joy comes from forgiveness and truthful living. Make forgiveness and patience thy milch-cow. Thus will the fall of thy soul be fed with the milk of spiritual bliss.

Again he says :

In the Hereafter counts neither caste nor worldly power. What counts there is purity and not these. (Asa Var, M. 1, Page 469)

Nanak! they alone are holy whose deeds are entered as such in Gods reckoning.

Theory of divine incarnation or *avtarvad* has no place in Sikhism as is the case with Islam, primarily because both the system do not entertain any idea of anthropomorphism. This again leads to the closeness of the concepts of *risalat*, prophethood, in Islam and of Guru in Sikhism. Both are divinely inspired religious, teachers who have attained moral and spiritual perfection.

In Sikhism the Guru is a messenger of God through whom He expresses Himself. God enlightens the seekers of truth through him and his word. Adi Granth says :

Those who encounter the Guru achieve indestructible love of God.  
The Guru bestows divine knowledge and unveils the mysteries of  
the three world

Without the Guru's help we cannot burn to nothingness the ashes  
of self-love

For the Guru kindles in the human hearts

The fire of the love of God

There comes the moment of knowing

My self is that self

Through faith in the Guru

The true self is known

What else do we need to know?

The most striking attribute of both the Islamic prophet and the Sikh Guru is that for all their sublimity and loftiness they count themselves

among the ordinary mortals, one among the equals. In one of the powerful invocations to the Creator, the Guru says;

The lowliest of the low; the humblest of the humble  
Nanak is with such; why need he envy those placed high?  
Lord, Thy mercy falls on the land where the humble are cherished.

(Sri Rag, M. 1, Page 15)

And Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) is exhorted in the Quran to declare that "I am nothing but a man like you." (17 : 93)

Both the religions do not accept that any human being, not even a prophet, can rise above normal considerations. Amoral spiritualism or mere *gyan* without *nirmal karma* is unacceptable to both. Noteworthy is also the fact that the both Islam and Sikhism have tended to avoid all shades of extremism in their ethical teachings.

Islam and Sikhism, however, differ in their attitude towards the theory of Karma. In Sikhism there is acceptance of the law of Karma but its application does not seem to be as inexorable as in its classical form. Karma in its classical formulation renders belief in God and His grace redundant but in Guru Nanak's formulation Karma is subservient to God's mercy and will. The Adi Granth says :

Countless sins of the past life are washed away by the illumination of the Word.

(Malar, Var, M. 3, Page 1283)

This is how the Sikh view of the Karma comes close to Islamic eschatology which lays more emphasis on God's grace and mercy and the linear progress of the human soul in the world beyond death, and rejects the automatic and mechanically calculated rewards and punishment of good and bad deeds in a cyclical existence that has neither a beginning nor an end.

In the Guru Granth Sahib there are numerous descriptions of the hereafter which have astonishing similarity with what Quran says about heaven and hell, particularly the latter. Dr. Gopal Singh in his book on Guru Nanak refers to a saying found in the Guru Granth Sahib about what fate awaits the evil doors :

The false ones find no refuge, their faces blackened, and they are  
marched off to hell.

And now see the Quranic verses on the subject :

They will lose all hopes



The faces of the evil ones will be blackened  
 The evil ones will be marched off to hell in groups

(3 : 106-107, 23 : 103-104, 25 : 44)

The commonness between the spiritual view and experience of the absolute Being in Guru Nanak and the Sufis believing in the doctrine of Wahdatul Wajood, the unity of existence, is very evident. The following verses of one of the most pious sufis, Jami, and words from Adi Granth prove this Kinship.

Jami says :

Dismiss every vain fancy and abandon every doubt  
 Blend into one every spirit and form and place.  
 Desire One, Chant of One, and seek One

In the Adi Granth we find :

Thou recitest the One, thou placest the One  
 In mind; thou recognizest the One  
 The One (is) in eye, in word, in mouth;  
 Thou Knowest the One in both places  
 In sleeping, the One; in waking, the  
 One; in the One thou art absorbed.

This kinship between Sikhism and Sufism is also evident from many identical concepts about God. Baba Farid Ganjshakar calls God 'the light of life' and Jalaluddin Rumi speaks of 'flashes of His love', Jami finds the 'light' of the Lord of angels animating all parts of the universe and Nizami informs "Then fell a light as of a lamp into the garden". The Adi Granth is full of similar expressions. Guru Nanak says : 'In all (is) light. He (is) light. From His light, there is light in all'. (Dhanasari, M. 1, p. 663) At another place he says, "The Luminous One is the mingler of light" Guru Gobind Singh says in Jaap :

His Name is contemplated  
 In all the fourteen words  
 His primal Light and Eternal Being  
 Creator of all the worlds  
 Supreme is He in beauty  
 Pure is Form  
 He is Infinite and perfect Being  
 Lo, He is the Essence of all religions  
 He is the spirit that pervades all  
 He is the glory of all  
 He is the light of all

Dr. Trump, the translator of the Adi Granth, has referred to the intimate connection between Sikhism and Sufism, in his Introduction to the Translation of the Adi Granth. He says :

We can distinguish in the Granth a grosser and finer kind of Pantheism... In this finer shade of Pantheism, creation assumes the form of emanation from the Supreme (as in the System of Sufis); the atomic matter is either likewise considered co-eternal with the Absolute and immanent in it, becoming moulded into various, distinct forms by the energising vigour of the absolute *joti* (light); or the reality of matter is more or less denied (as by the sufis who call it the *adam*) so that the Divine *joti* is the only real essence in all.

Faith in equality of all men before God is another principle that establishes kinship between Islam and Sikhism. By making egalitarianism one of the fundamental articles of faith and enforcing it with all the power at his command, Guru Nanak not only dealt a severe blow at the chains of bondage of man by man but also confronted the contemporary Muslims society with the moral challenge that it is now upto him to turn into reality what Muslims have been ordained but forgotten to practice. Renowned historian Prof. M. Mujeeb analysing the Muslim society of that time, says :

Islam no doubt ordains an egalitarian society. But there was nothing egalitarian about Muslim society in India. Divisions on the basis of race and descent were recognized, in particular the difference between the central Asian Turks and Tajiks, the Pathans and Indian Muslims. The Sayyids were honoured above all others, whether they deserved it or not. Differences of rank could be ignored with great risk. The democratic Muslim salutation 'As Salaam-o-Alakum' was for equal in status only. It was not used in the court; and elsewhere, if there was a too pronounced difference of rank or status, it would have to be combined with a bowing and placing of the hand on the head which would neutralise its egalitarian quality. The form in which Guru Nanak preached the equality of men could only be an occurrence of the heart, intimately connected with his belief in the one God.

It is in this context that the new faith established by Guru Nanak can be termed as some essence of Islamic revelation having found expression in a new religions idiom.

But despite so much closeness between their faiths, Muslims and

Sikhs unfortunately could not come as closer to each other. History of Muslim-Sikhs relations has been much more of conflicts than co-existence. The memories of bloodbath of the Partition days is still fresh in many minds. The pain and suffering of the persecution by the Mughal rulers have also become part and parcel of the Sikh psyche. Although many Sikhs have now outgrown this past, so much still needs to be done to forge new bonds of understanding between the two faiths. To highlight this need of coexistence between Islam and Sikhism I will again borrow the words of Prof. Mujeeb who has expressed these sentiments rather too beautifully :

It may appear strange that a Muslim should argue against the view that Guru Nanak was influenced by Islam. But the belief that 'Din', the true religion, has been revealed to all men is one of the basic doctrines of Islam, and this belief is confirmed, not weakened by the assertion that Guru Nanak's teachings present an independent, original spiritual experience. The Sikh is not obliged to the Muslim or the Muslim to the Sikh, and their faith in their own religions should be all the stronger because of any confirmation of the one by the other. If they walk steadfastly on what is their true path they will discover that their paths and their goal are the same. That discovery will itself be a spiritual experience, an 'occurrence of the heart', a fulfilment of what God in a story related by Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi, said to Moses. 'You have been sent to unite, not to divide'.

# GURU GRANTH SAHIB AND THE TAMIL PRABANDHAS

*N. Muthu Mohan*

## **Introduction**

I have been asked to present a study of the Guru Granth Sahib in comparison to the Tamil Prabhandhas. It is understood that by the term Tamil Prabhandhas is meant the Tamil Sacred scriptures. However, the corpus of Tamil Sacred scriptures is not one and as the religious and cultural life comprises of varied traditional and modern life patterns and affiliations, its commitment to scriptures too is varied and multiple. One can classify that the following scriptures are popular among the people of Tamilnadu.

1. Thirukural, a text of around two thousand years old that emerged expressing the Jaina and Buddhist influence and considered as a secular scripture of the Tamils.

2. The 12 Thirumurais of the Tamil Saivism. They comprise the devotional as well as philosophical texts of Tamil Saivism

3. Nalayira Divya Prabhandham—the Tamil Vaishnavite compilation of the 12 Alwar-saints. It forms the scripture of the Thenkalai (Southern) Vaishnavites that is different from that of the Vadakalai or northern Vaishnavism that holds the Vedas as its basic scripture.

Of course, there are a few more new religious movements that appeared during the more recent period, during the 19th and 20th centuries. We have not dealt with the latter in the present paper due to lack of space and time.

## **Guru Granth Sahib and Thirukural**

Thirukural is a Tamil text of 2000 years old and it is a poetic work of 1330 couplets. Thiruvalluvar is said to be the author of the work. Thirukural was composed when Jainism and Buddhism flourished in the ancient Tamil land and the work, however, is not a treatise of Jaina or Buddhist philosophy or religion, but a work of practical ethics

addressed to the common people, mostly from the point of view the common people. This specific background renders Thirukural a secular outlook and a philosophy of ethical living.

For our present purpose, we may take up the question, what are the grounds of comparing Guru Granth Sahib and Thirukural?

Guru Granth Sahib and Thirukural are directly or indirectly associated with or comparable to the Shramanic traditions namely Jainism and Buddhism. The Tamil culture in its history has a strong substratum of Jainism and Buddhism and their influence is so wide and deep that some scholars claim that the Tamils were originally Buddhists(1). It seems that the north western Indian region too had the strong sway of Buddhism at some historical period. The prominence of Taxila hosting a famous Buddhist University and the emergence of Sarvastivada, a philosophical branch of Buddhism in this University, support this fact. Linguistically, both Tamil and Punjabi languages have undergone the impact of Pali language.

Guru Granth Sahib and Thirukural, although chronologically separated by around 1500 years, are united by a common thread and share the general ideological trend that they give priority to ethical and practical living. The ethics of Thirukural is prior to the advent of devotional movement led by Saivism and Vaishnavism, whereas the ethics of Guru Granth Sahib hails after the devotional traditions that engulfed north India. One is pre-bhakti (pre-devotional) and another is post-bhakti (post-devotional). One is pre-medieval and another is post-medieval. Thirukural sets itself committed to ethical without yet having the experience of devotional in Tamil context but Guru Granth Sahib proposes the ethical after intensively undergoing the experiences of devotionalism in this part of the country. One may work out an hypothesis that a mind set that is entrusted to ethical thinking after going through the medieval space of devotionalism anyhow reaches back to the same ethical and practical reason in a higher conscious level.

Another interesting aspect that brings Guru Granth Sahib and Thirukural closer is the philosophical plane of *meeri-piri* or unity of spiritual and temporal that forms the basis of both the scriptures. In the case of Thirukural, of course, it is not exactly the principle of *meeri-piri*, but may be, the Buddhist middle path that makes its philosophical

standpoint. It is remarkable here to note that the principles of *meeri-piri* and middle path do have amazing similarities, one throwing light on the other, one forming a natural ally with the other. Both the principles exclude the extremes of otherworldliness and thisworldliness, leave out the rigidities of asceticism and consumerism and criticize sophistic rationalism and meaningless ritualism. Along with rejecting the extremes they advocate a negotiating practical philosophy, enter into a philosophical realm that is flexible, fluid and even non-conceptual. The ethical is not an addition or implication to the standpoints of Guru Granth Sahib and Thirukural, but it makes the basic philosophical position of the two scriptures. It is from the ethical standpoint Guru Granth Sahib and Thirukural evaluate the transcendental, the world and the place of humans in life. The ethical is the natural and inevitable outcome of the merger of spiritual and temporal as well as the middle path.

The world abides; for worthy men  
its weight sustain.  
Were it not so,  
It would fall to dust again.

(Thirukural-996)

No greater gain than virtue  
ought can cause;  
No greater loss than life  
Oblivious of her laws

(Thirukural-42)

In the case of Thirukural it is above all the realm of ethics and in the case of Guru Granth Sahib it is the realm of ethics, aesthetics and social justice.

The ethical standpoint of Guru Granth Sahib and Thirukural distinguishes itself from the type of normative principles prevalent in the broader Indian context namely the varna-caste order. Indian history in its major parts knows only the compartmentalized ethics of Manu-dharma and even the sacred literature of the Brahmanic world stands to substantiate and defend the caste system. The philosophies of the Vedic corpus render metaphysical justification to the caste order. As such the Vedic-Vedantic world-view miserably fails in working out a universal ethics applicable to all people in equal footing. The greatness of Guru Granth Sahib and Thirukural lies at challenging this fundamental

arrangement of Indian society. The scriptures of the Sikhs and Tamils formulate an alternative ethics that is universal and humane. Guru Granth Sahib openly declares that the texts that justify caste system cannot be considered sacred :

God looks upon all mortals with the same eye,  
And deems them all equal

(Guru Granth Sahib, 730).

Thirukural too comes out to denounce the caste order that was just then sneaking into the Tamil society :

All humans that live are one  
in circumstances of birth;  
Diversities of works  
Give each his special worth

(Thirukural-983)

The men of lofty line, whose souls  
are mean, are never great;  
The men of lowly birth, when high  
Of soul, are not of low estate

(Thirukural-984)

Perceive in all humans the light of God.  
Do not ask for caste.  
In the hereafter there is no caste

(Guru Granth Sahib, 349)

Caste and status are futile,  
For the one Lord watches over all

(Guru Granth Sahib, 83)

One of the recurring themes in Guru Granth Sahib and Thirukural is the theme of truth. Both the scriptures consider truth as the highest value and announce that more desirable is truthful living. We know that "How to live truthfully?" is the basic question posed by the Guru in the Japuji Sahib. Thirukural too declares that there is no value higher than truth. It preaches to be truthful in words, thoughts and deeds.

One does not reach heaven through mere talk.  
It is through acting in accordance with Truth (*sachu*)  
That one finds release

(Guru Granth Sahib, 141)

The social partisanship of Guru Granth Sahib and Thirukural is registered in the most indubitable words.

The people wailed in their agony of suffering,  
Didst thou feel no compassion for them?

If a powerful foe molest one equally powerful,  
 Little would be there to complain.  
 But if a ferocious tiger falls upon a herd of kine  
 Then the Master be called to account

(Guru Granth Sahib, 360)

If He that shaped the world desires  
 that man should begging go,  
 Through life's long course,  
 Let Him be a wanderer be and perish so

(Thirukural-1062)

### **Guru Granth Sahib and the Nalayira Divyaprabhandam**

Nalayira Divyaprabhandam is a compilation of 4000 Vaishnavite devotional hymns that were composed by the 12 Alvars of Tamilnadu. The word Alwar literally means the persons who are immersed in feelings of devotionism.

The Alvars lived from 5th century A.D to 9th century A.D and they hail from various social strata including from the depressed communities of Tamilnadu. Nathamuni, a Vaishnavite saint of 10th century compiled the songs into a singular work. Divyaprabhandam contains 3000 hymns in musical form and the remaining in poetic form.

The Tamils do not consider the devotionism of Divyaprabhandam to be an extension of the Bhagavata tradition of North India but they derive the origins of bhakti from the native Tamil culture itself. The Vishnu who is celebrated in Divyaprabhandam is said to be the continuation of the cult of Mayon (literally, a black deity of the ancient forest lands of the Tamils-Mullai). Bhakti itself is believed to have started from the southern parts of Tamilnadu. Indeed the poetry of Divyaprabhandam contains so many aspects of native Tamil poetry of the pre-Buddhistic age. It is considered as the return of the spontaneous nature poetry of the Tamils. It is thickly dyed with the specificities of land, nature and human emotions. The rich corpus of fertility symbols of the Tamil folklore reappears in Divyaprabhandam.

The affluent musical and poetic forms of the Tamils re-emerges in Divyaprabhandam. The language of Tamil occupies a special esteemed place in the bhakti poetry of the Vaishnavites (also in the devotional hymns of the Saivites). Divyaprabhandam repeatedly says that the God Vishnu or Krishna could not be comprehended otherwise than through



the language of Tamil and through the emotive music of the Tamils. The language of Tamil appears with its own distinct identity in the devotional poetry of the Vaishnavites and Saivites.

The theme of divine message being revealed in the so called vernacular languages, and thus the vernacular languages becoming religiously important, becomes a crucial issue in this context. This problem is equally important both to the Sikhs and the Tamils. The Hindu orthodoxy holds the view that the divine is revealed only in Sanskrit language. But scriptural status to Guru Granth Sahib, Nalayira Divya Prabhandam and Saivite hymns such as Devaram and Thiruvvasagam insists the point that God is revealed to the people in their own languages. It is stepping out of the Sanskrit fold and acquiring autonomous status by the peoples' languages. If we take into consideration that Bhakti itself is not of Vedic origin, then Bhakti could be understood as consciously superseding the limitations of Vedas and Sanskrit. Bhakti in this context has to be comprehended as an alternative tradition to the Vedic and Vedantic line of thought.

It is interesting here to raise a question, Why does Bhakti address to the musical path of perceiving God? Why does music play so vital a role in Sikh and Tamil devotional cultures? The problem has to be discussed starting from the Vedic distinction of Om from other earthly differentiated sounds. The Upanishads-opened up this type of differentiation. According to the Upanishads, the basic, undifferentiated and indivisible sound of Om is equivalent to the Nirguna Brahman whereas the differentiated, multi-vocal and polyvalent sounds of temporal reality are equivalent to chaotic Maya. The former is the ultimate reality and the later is illusion. This is Vedanta philosophy. Vedanta considers the Brahman as the sacred and the temporal world as profane. This gave Vedanta the religious sanction to colonize the temporal world by the Brahman. But the entry of the devotional traditions, in principle, occurs not in the transcendental territory but in the temporal realm. Consequently, the devotional captures and reinterprets particularly the "chaotic" and introduces its own order into it. The target of the devotional is not the monotonous OM, but the so called chaotic. The "temporal and chaotic" world is seriously addressed by the devotional saints and the alternative order has been sought within it and through it. The devotional

saints refuse to accept the concept of the Vedantins that the temporal is irrevocably chaotic that it cannot be domesticated. Music is the alternative order introduced into the “chaotic” noises of the temporal reality. The devotional tradition is an optimism of temporality that it can be cultivated, that an alternative way of living could be worked out for millions of common people. Not merely the temporal chaos is announced that it could be cultivated, but it gains a superior position than the transcendental realm. Bhakti confidently declares that it is higher than Brahmanism. The superimposed aristocratic culture of Om suffers here its massive jolt.

Guru Granth Sahib and Divyaprabhandam as devotional texts are significant to the Sikhs and the Tamils for they denounce the concept of Maya proposed by the dry intellectual philosophy of Vedanta. Guru Granth Sahib and Divyaprabhandam propose an alternative path of reaching the divine that is emotional, passionate, earthly and personal. God is reachable to the devotees exclusively by their total love and submission to God. Guru Granth Sahib declares :

Air, water, earth and sky-all are the Lord's abode. Himself in all these He operates. What I may call unreal?

(Guru Granth Sahib, 143)

Again

Reville not the world for anything, by the Lord is it created.

(Guru Granth Sahib, 611)

Of the episode of the rope and the serpent : now the mystery have we realized somewhat. As by the sight of innumerable bangles, one forgets the gold : Now I express not that illusion. In all innumerable forms is the sole Lord pervasive; Disporting in all.

(Guru Granth Sahib, 658)

The emotional appeal as such and the variety of beauty appreciated in devotional poetry are antidotes to perceiving reality as Maya. The Tamils believe that Divyaprabhandam renders the philosophical foundations of Visistadvaita that was theoretically formulated by Ramanuja. It has to be noted that Visistadvaita is a philosophical critique of Sankara's Advaita from the theistic as well realistic points of view.

Guru Granth Sahib is comparable to the Tamil Prabhandam in many aspects, particularly in its emotional plea to the deity, fervent musical way of embracing the personal God, its idea of absolute surrender to

the one God and commitment to service and *sewa*. However, Guru Granth Sahib is devoid of the mythological perception of God in avatars and avatars, and ritual ways of adoring God. Guru Granth Sahib equally does not give space for the emergence of priestly class in its quarters. These are some fundamental differences that distinguish the Sikh way of life from the popular devotional traditions of Saivism or Vaishnavism.

Apart from these distinctions, there is another major divergence in the path originated by the great Gurus. The ethical note is fundamental to Guru Granth Sahib that leaves its essential mark in Sikh devotionalism. The mythological, the ritual and the priestly are replaced in Guru Granth Sahib by the ethical and moral. This is the post-medieval turn that was created by the Sikh Gurus. Guru Granth Sahib contains a unique synthetic message of devotionalism and ethics that was unknown in Indian history. It is this synthesis of ethics and devotionalism that lands Sikhism in recurrently demanding inward purity and truthfulness from the devotees or the followers. There is a very conscious and cognizant attempt in Guru Granth Sahib to transform the ritualistic devotionalism into ethical devotionalism. It is indeed a revolutionary transformation with enduring humanistic and societal implications :

If the mind is unclean how can it be purified by worshipping stones,  
visiting places of pilgrimage, living in jungles, wandering around as  
an ascetic?

(Guru Granth Sahib, 686)

Make mercy your mosque, Faith your prayer-mat,  
and righteousness your Quran.  
Make humility your circumcision, uprightness your fasting,  
And so you will be a true Muslim.  
Make goodwork your Kaaba, truth your pir,  
And compassion your creed and your prayer

(Guru Granth Sahib, 140)

Make the merciful Lord your salgram, your object of worship, O  
Pandit, and good deeds your garland of Tulsi.  
Why waste your life in irrigating sterile land ?  
Why plaster a mud wall  
When it will surely fall ?

(Guru Granth Sahib, 1171)

It is interesting in this regard to revert back to the Tamil context.

In Tamil History, Divyaprabhandam, the devotional text replaced

Thirukural, the ethical text. One observes a contrast in this replacing. Accusing Thirukural of Jaina and Buddhist influences, the Saivite and Vaishnavite devotional poetry upheld the so called native religiosity. Although Thirukural withstood this historical onslaught of devotional tradition, the devotional thought as such failed to inherit the ethical foundations of Thirukural. This is a vulnerable point in the devotional heritage of the Tamils. But the devotionalism of Guru Granth Sahib has overcome this problem by an appropriate synthesis of ethics and devotionism.

The ethical orientation of the devotionalism of Guru Granth Sahib continues to flourish with its experiences with the Siddha poetry too. As we know, the Siddhas cultivated an enlightened egoism and they were overconfident of this. And this attitude took them miles away from the life and problems of the common people. But Guru Nanak was always with the people. His demand was to quench the thirst of the people. Any philosophical or religious problem for Guru Nanak must be formulated so as to address the issues of the people. There was a lot of love in the heart of the great Guru :

The path of true Yoga is found in dwelling in God  
while yet living in the midst of the world's temptations

(Guru Granth Sahib, 730)

Guru Granth Sahib places the ideal of liquidation of *haumain*, both earthly and enlightened, and reaching the inward purity, love and truthfulness (*sahaja*).

### **Guru Granth Sahib and Saivite Thirumurais**

The third set of scriptures we study is the 12 sacred works of Saivism, both philosophical and devotional, that comprise the chronological period from 5th century to 16th century of the Tamil history. The earlier texts are of devotional songs that are compiled in Devarnam and Thiruvagam, and the later texts are of philosophical nature that is found in works like Sivajnana Botham and Sivajnana Siddhiar.

The significance of the Saivite scriptures for our present purpose is that they contain a strong realistic note in terms of recognizing the importance of temporal life and human endeavours in the spiritual quest of humans. While the devotional poetry of Saivite Bhakti explores the spontaneity of temporal aspects of life, the later philosophical works

theoretically formulate the meaning of earthly life in the scheme of the spiritual life. The implied realism of the Bhakti poetry is brought to explicit discussion in the philosophical texts. The outcome of the Saivite exercise is close to the standpoint of *meeri-piri* of Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh scripture. Both the schools of thought denounce the Vedantic concept of evaluating the temporal life as maya and meaningless. May be, the ways of coming to this common stand are different.

Guru Granth Sahib uses the logic, God is true, His actions are true, one of His actions is the creation of the world, consequently the world is true

Thou art all-holy  
All-holy is Thy Creation

(Guru Granth Sahib, 423)

He created night and day, seasons and occasions.  
So also air, water, fire and the nether regions;  
Amidst these has He fixed the earth,  
The place for righteous action

(Guru Granth Sahib, 7)

The Saivite Thirumurais follow a different way to reach almost the same point of view. Saiva Siddhanta recognizes three fundamental realities namely, God (Pati), Individual Selves (Pasu) and Bondage (Paasam). Siddhanta holds the view that all the three are uncreated (Anaathi). In this way Saiva Siddhanta claims that it is a theistic and realistic system. Rendering uncreated status to bondage is a rare position in Indian philosophy and it may be unique feature of Saiva Siddhanta. How is this justified? Bondage is like the husk of the rice grain and the verdigris of copper always with the individual selves, says Siddhanta. The individual selves must get rid of the bondage and must find their path to God (Pati). The Siddhantins explain the bondage as the original spiritual dirt (Mula malam) called Anavam or Ego. It is the principle of Individuation. The selves involve in the process of individuation and also acquire the ego, and this exactly is the making of bondage. Before going into the next point of discussion, let us briefly stop here and see the remarkable similarity the Saiva Siddhanta has with Sikhism. Siddhanta makes Bondage equivalent to Ego and perceives it as a compound concept. Ego has a twofold meaning that it is the principle of individuation that contains a productive meaning to make the individual souls separate

among themselves and thus plays a positive role in the process of evolution. Saivism accommodates the Samkya scheme here. Ego has the second meaning that it develops into the source of bondage and suffering. So it is the *malam* or malady. It ought to be removed so that the free individual soul becomes one with God. Devotion is the way to achieve this ultimate union. The twofold function of Anavam or ego is similar to the principle of Haumain and elimination of Haumain in Guru Granth Sahib. Haumain too is portrayed in Guru Granth Sahib as the principle of individuation, the malady and cure in the scheme of Guru Granth Sahib :

In haumain one comes and in haumain one goes;  
 In haumain one is born and in haumain one dies;  
 In haumain one gives and in haumain one takes;  
 In haumain one acquires and in haumain one casts away;  
 In haumain one is truthful and in haumain one lies;  
 In haumain one pays regard sometimes to virtue and sometimes to evil

(Guru Granth Sahib, 466)

The understanding about the functions of ego makes Guru Granth Sahib and the Saivite Thirumurais scriptures of realistic philosophies.

The Saiva Siddhanta holds the view that the World is a created being. The world has been created by God for a particular purpose. Seeing the suffering of people due to Anavam or bondage, God creates the world so that the individual selves live in the world and at some juncture understand the uselessness of it to turn towards God. Humans must go through the experiences of life on earth and consciously must choose the way to God. This principle in Saiva Siddhanta goes with the name *malam* (dirt) is removed by *malam* (dirt) itself. This means that the world has been created by God out of His boundless love towards the selves. This renders a relative justification to temporal living on earth and it suggests to make the life a worthy one. As one can ponder about, it is clear that Saiva Siddhanta contains a strong realistic note that takes it closer to the philosophy of Guru Granth Sahib.

### Conclusion

We have tried to bring out the salient features that are ingrained in the scriptures of the Sikhs and the Tamils. They indeed exhibit common trends. Above all they are the richness of ethical problematic, the

synthesis of the ethical and the devotional and the practical and realistic note towards temporal living. In the history of Indian religious and philosophical traditions, the Sikhs and the Tamils indeed make a distinct identity that they resist to go in hands with the Vedic-Vedantic ways of thought and their sociological implications. They really represent an alternative thinking and living. The Sikhs and Tamils knowing each other more would help strengthening the above said alternative mode of living.

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